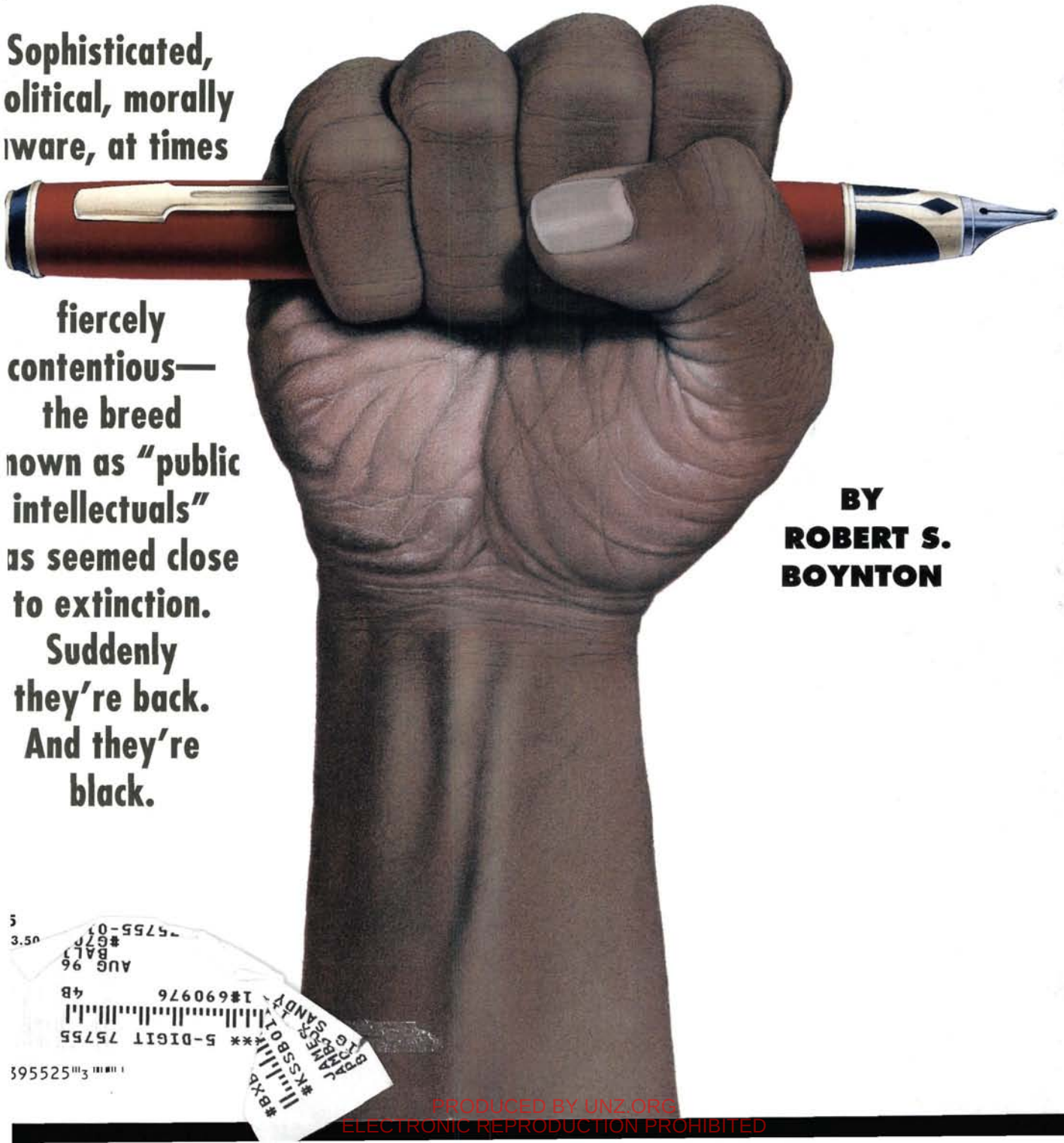
POLITICAL PORTRAIT OF PHIL GRAMM / FICTION BY JOHN BARTH

The Atlantic Monthly

MARCH 1995

THE NEW INTELLECTUALS

Sophisticated, olitical, morally ıware, at times fiercely contentious— the breed nown as "public intellectuals" as seemed close to extinction. Suddenly they're back. And they're black.



BY ROBERT S. BOYNTON

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How Obsessed Are Our Engineers With Safety? Let's Start With The Stereo.

One would expect a luxury car to list dual airbags, anti-lock brakes and crumpl

zones among its safety features. But a stereo? Not so outlandish when you consider how ou

engineers designed the stereo in the Lexus ES 300. For one, they made it so the button

can recede into the panel to create a dash with less protru

sions. They also placed the buttons where you'd expect to fin

them. That way, changing a channel or adjusting the volum

won't distract you from the road. Extreme, yes. But this kin

of unflagging attention to detail is not the exception at Lexu

It is the absolute rule. In fact, you would be hard-pressed t

find a single system within the ES 300 that was designed

built without safety in mind. This holds true for features that are as seemingly innocuou

as the headlights and even the walnut trim. If you would like to learn more, please ca

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these safety features. And perhaps even play one for you.

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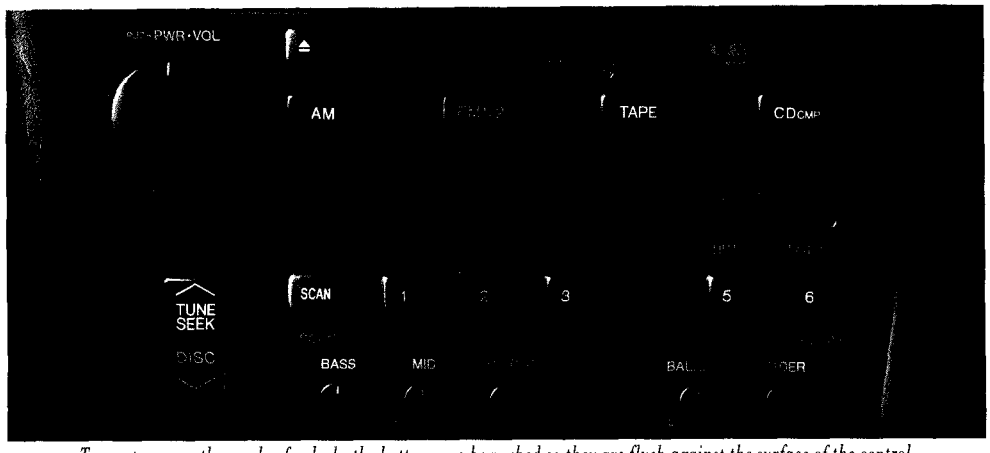
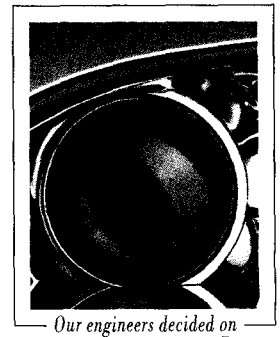


To create a smoother and safer dash, the buttons can be pushed so they are flush against the surface of the control panel. After all, the stereo was designed to handle the subtle nuances of a quartet, as well as the not-so-subtle impact of an accident.



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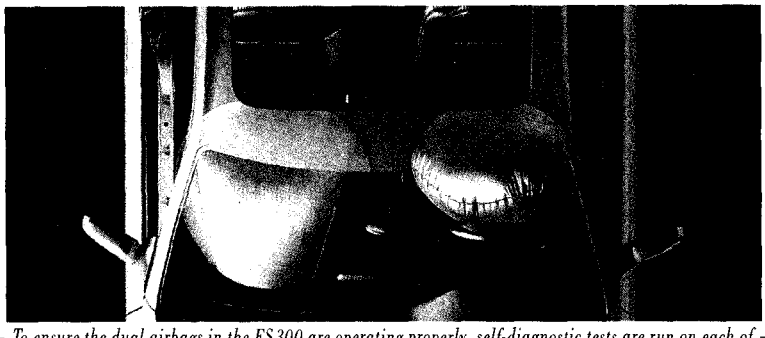

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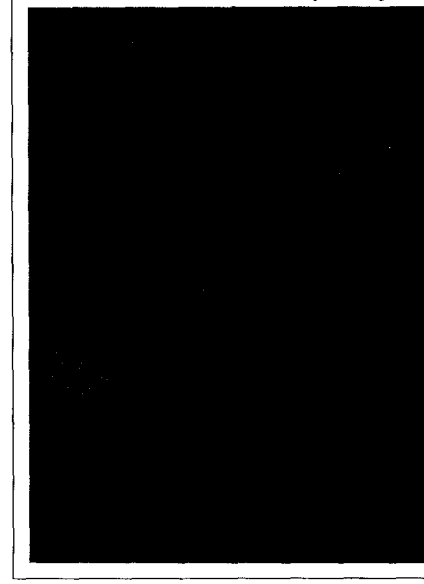

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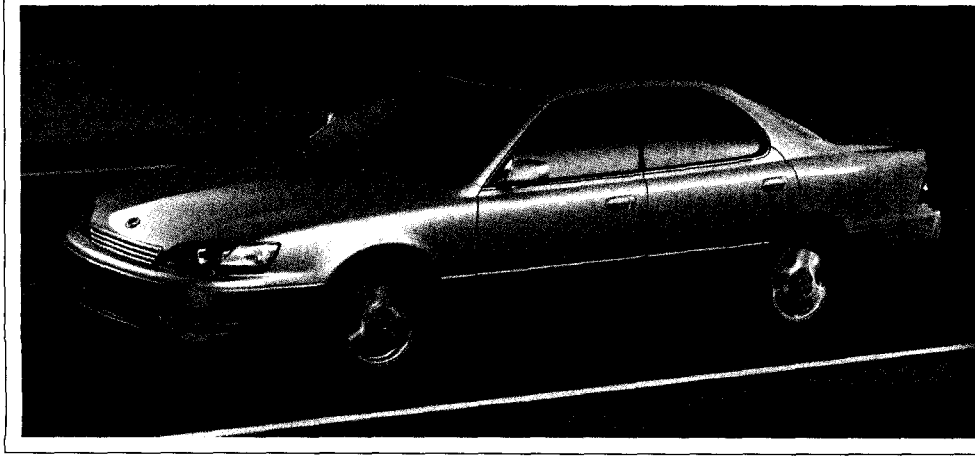

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Steve Arnold
Director, Systems for Mass Markets Support Delivery
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The Atlantic Monthly (ISSN 0276-9077) is published monthly by The Atlantic Monthly Company, 745 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116 (617-536-9500). Second-class postage paid at Boston, MA, Toronto, Ont., and additional mailing offices. Printed in U.S.A. Advertising and Circulation: 1290 Avenue of the Americas, N.Y, N.Y. 10104 (212-830-1900). Subscriptions: $17.94 for one year, $29.95 for two years, $39.95 for three years in the United States and its possessions; $8.00 additional a year in Canada, includes GST (123209926); $15.00 additional a year elsewhere. Subscription queries: Atlantic Subscription Processing Center, Box 52661, Boulder, CO 80322. Or call 800-234-2411. Back issues: send $5.00 per copy to The Atlantic, Back Issues, 200 North 12th St., Newark, NJ 07107. Vol. 275, No. 3, March 1995. Copyright © 1995, by The Atlantic Monthly Company. All rights reserved. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Atlantic, Box 52661, Boulder, CO 80322.

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On the white expanse of Antarctica's Filchner Ice Shelf, glaciologist Dr. Monica Kristensen watches as members of her team remove a ten-meter core sample from the ice. "By studying the different layers, we can see how the climate has varied and carbon dioxide levels have changed over the past few hundred years," she says.

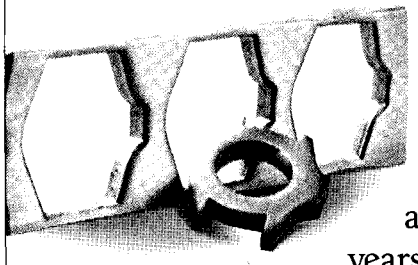
The global warming trend caused by a rise in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases is among Dr. Kristensen's most pressing concerns. Many scientists fear that the increases in temperature brought about by such a rise will eventually cause the polar ice caps to start melting, raising sea levels everywhere.

"It's difficult to get the public to focus on something that may not become a problem for a few hundred years," she says. "So my mission right now is to increase public awareness. People need to realize that the polar regions are an important part of the earth's climate system. What happens there will affect all of us."

Her research often takes her to desolate stretches of the Antarctic, where she must remain for months at a time. Says Dr. Kristensen, "Because the conditions here are harsh, my equipment has to be as tough and reliable as my Rolex."

"The earth's climate is like a giant puzzle, and the polar regions hold many of the clues."

Dr. Monica Kristensen



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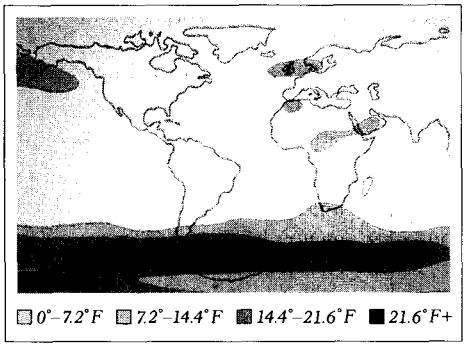
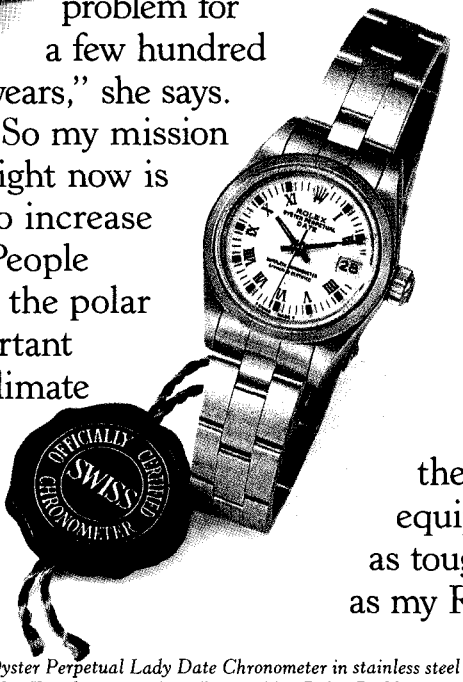


Predicted increase in July temperatures after atmospheric CO_2 concentrations double. Calculations based on existing trends indicate this will happen by the year 2030.



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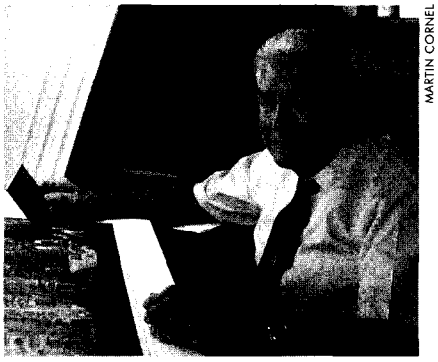
745 BOYLSTON STREET

THIS is the first issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* since November of 1963 to appear without the skilled ministrations of Joseph O'Connell, who is retiring. As production director, O'Connell supervised the printing of every page of every issue. Through seasonal inconveniences he made his way each month to the remote locales where the magazine has been printed, regularly staying awake thirty-six hours straight to see an issue through. The pride Joe took in his work was infectious. His colleagues admired him for that and also, greatly, for what they knew of his service in the Second World War.


MARTIN CORNEL

Before the war O'Connell, a Boston native, was a practice goalie for the Bruins—this at the time the Bruins were picking up their second and third Stanley Cup victories. During the war O'Connell's unit, the 17th Field Artillery of the Second Army Corps, was in combat for 666 consecutive days, one of the longest such runs in the war—if not the longest. O'Connell's war ended during the siege of Monte Cassino, in April of 1944, when a wound sustained a year earlier finally caught up with him.

O'Connell was wounded in Tunisia. By a lucky fluke he was not with his outfit when it was surprised and decimated by Rommel's Afrika Korps at Kasserine Pass. Shortly thereafter O'Connell was in a convoy of trucks, bringing ammunition up to the guns at El Guettar, when it was strafed by German Stuka dive bombers. His truck was hit by a bomb and blown off the road. Both of O'Connell's knees were injured. But he did not report the incident. "We had lost too many guys at Kasserine," he remembers. "The outfit couldn't afford to lose any more." So O'Connell fought on, until he collapsed. Pain has been his constant companion ever since.

For his self-sacrifice and his valor in combat, Sergeant Joseph O'Connell was nominated for the Legion of Merit. O'Connell rarely said anything about the war, though he permitted us to use a photograph of the jacket he was wearing at Monte Cassino in the artwork accompanying Studs Terkel's "The Good War" (July, 1984, *Atlantic*). He gave us the full details of his service only when pressed for them, on his last day at the magazine.

We will miss Joe O'Connell. He honored us all with his presence. —THE EDITORS

CONTRIBUTORS

Phoebe-Lou Adams ("From York to Jorvik") has been a member of the *Atlantic* staff for fifty years. Her short reviews have been appearing in the magazine, under various titles, since September of 1952.

John Barth ("Stories of Our Lives") is the author of numerous books, including *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1960) and *Chimera* (1972), which won the National Book Award for fiction. His latest book, *Further Fridays: Essays, Lectures, and Other Nonfiction 1984–1994*, will be published this fall.

Robert Bly ("Bad People") is the author of many books, including *Iron John* (1990) and *Meditations on the Insatiable Soul* (1994), a collection of poems.

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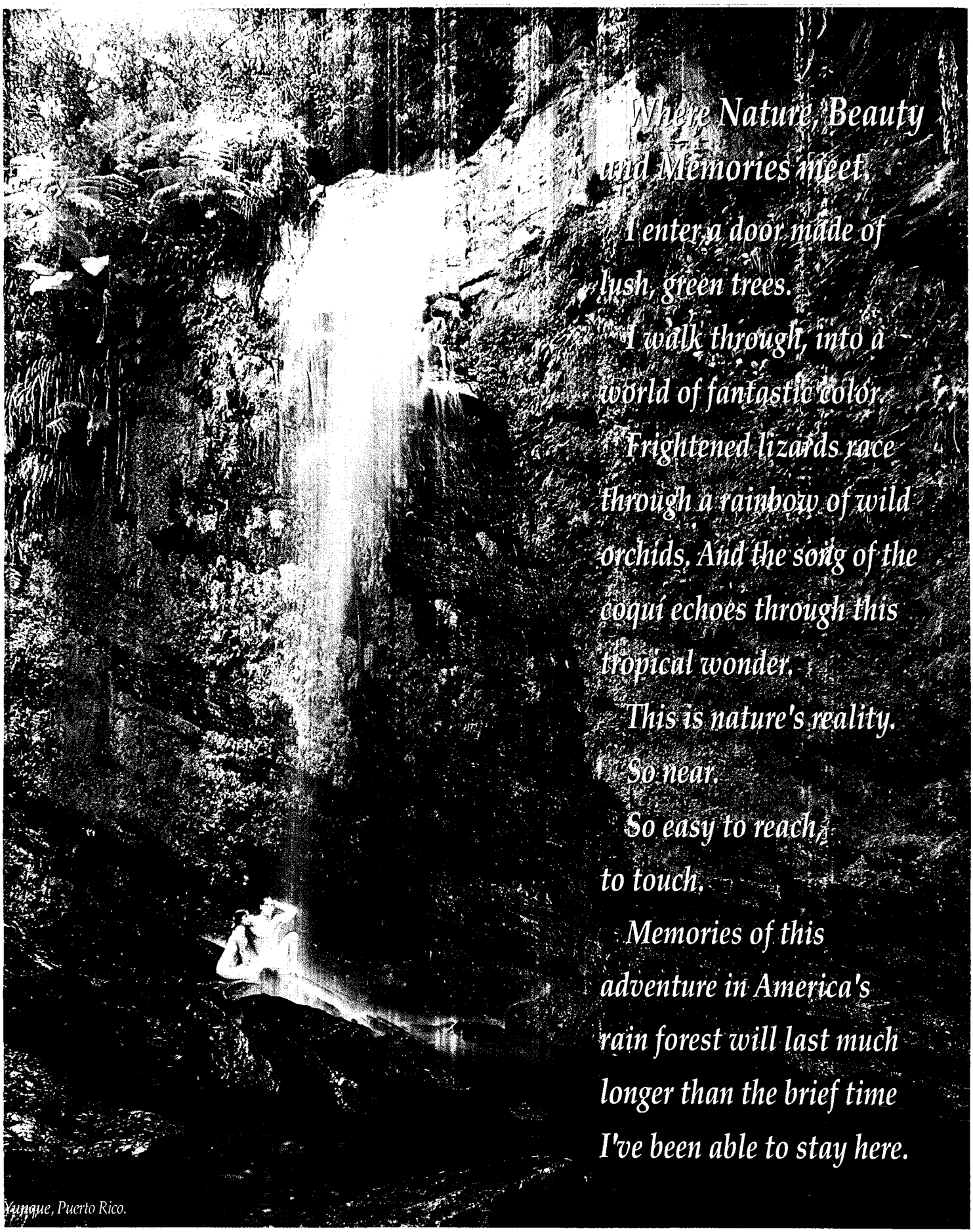

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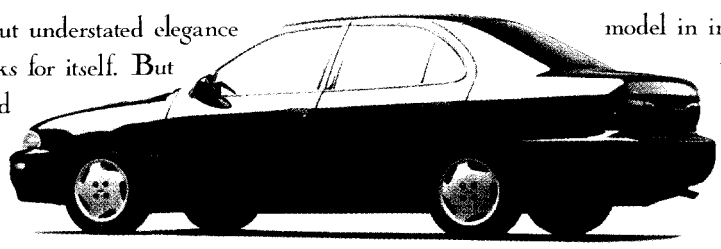

model in initial quality in its price class, we found it difficult to keep it to ourselves. Besides, with the hundreds of new car and truck choices available to you,

According To J.D. Power and Associates, Geo Prizm Is The Best Overa

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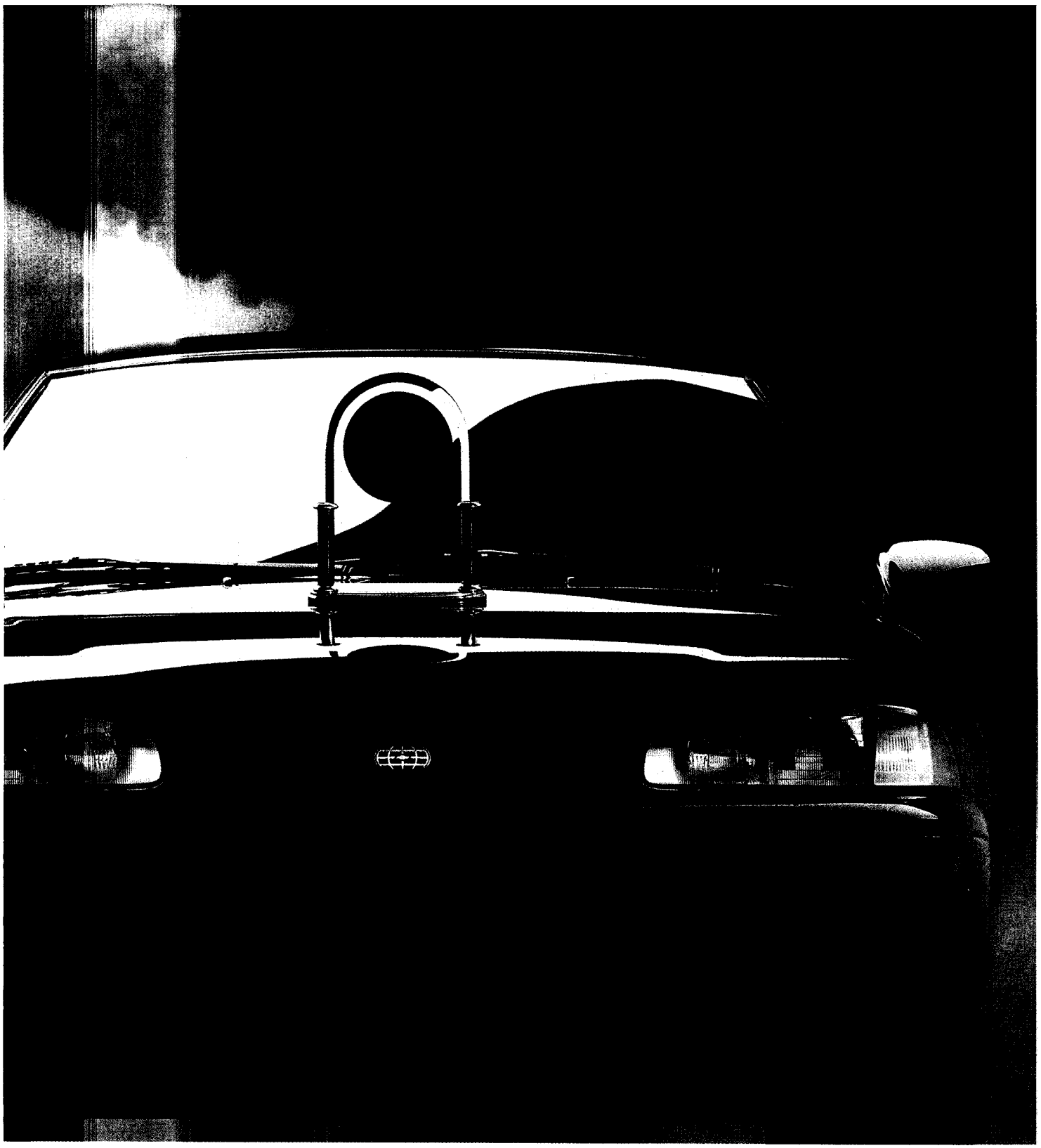

we thought a little guidance might be a welcome thing. While we're on the subject, we might also mention *Automobile Magazine* has named Prizm one of its All-Stars for the second straight year. Not that we want to brag or anything. On second thought, why not? Call 1-800-GET-2-KNO for more information.

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LETTERS

Rest Against the West

Thank you for publishing the provocative essay by Matthew Connelly and Paul Kennedy ("Must It Be the Rest Against the West?") and Virginia Abernethy's sensible reply ("Optimism and Overpopulation") in the December *Atlantic*. I share their concerns. I would like to add another voice to this belated discussion of the connection between Western aid, population policy, development, and immigration, addressing concerns of another order.

When Connelly and Kennedy prescribe the promotion of contraception in Third World countries as crucial to reducing population growth and migration to the West, and when Abernethy offers more-guarded support to the idea, each of them ignores the social effects of the introduction of contraception and the mindset that accompanies and ratifies its use. These effects were predicted by critics of Margaret Sanger and her birth control–eugenics movement in the 1920s, and have been confirmed by experience here in the West.

These critics—who ranged from G. K. Chesterton to Mahatma Gandhi—predicted that the technological separation of sexual activity from childbearing would quickly result in an explosion in extramarital sexual activity, the breakdown of long-treasured moral standards, a radical shift in gender roles, and an alteration in the social meaning of marriage: from a lifelong institution dedicated to child rearing to a temporary arrangement dedicated to personal emotional fulfillment. For the record, these critics were uniformly dismissed as reactionary alarmists; Sanger and her allies assured Americans that birth control was intended exclusively for the improvement and defense of marriage, that its availability would never result in a wave of promiscuity, and that the frequency of abortion would decrease.

All the alarmists' worst nightmares came true. The sexual revolution that ensued exceeded the French Revolution in its radicality and its destructiveness—especially as it has played out in the lower-income and black communities of America, where illegitimacy rates exploded, the age of sexual initiation plummeted, women rearing children alone displaced jobless male breadwinners as the main recipients of public assistance, generations of fatherless children grew up on the dole with minimal discipline, and the relationship between men and women returned to conditions that can only be called barbaric. More than a million abortions a year have been performed in America since 1973—up from fewer than 100,000 in the 1950s—but the rate of illegitimate and teenage births still climbs. Abortion is hardly an issue that can be neatly bracketed out of the discussion, as Connelly and Kennedy would like to do; it is the unavoidable result, the logical culmination, of the radical shift in the social meaning of sexuality introduced by contraception.

John Patrick Zmirak
Baton Rouge, La.

On November 8 more than 4.6 million Californians displayed the intense fear of foreigners detailed in Jean Raspail's novel and the Connelly-Kennedy article. The measure they passed by a three-to-two margin, Proposition 187, denies public education and medical care to illegal immigrants and their families. Much of the impetus for the measure came from a governor who needed an issue to offset the political impact of a recessionary state economy. (While still a senator, Pete Wilson promoted programs that provided a steady flow of foreign workers for his agricultural constituents.) Ironically, the situation today resembles that of the 1930s—a backlash occurring when net migration into the state approaches zero. Hardly anyone complained in those prosperous postwar decades when net

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The Atlantic Monthly

migration exceeded a third of a million annually.

In the national debate on immigration, as in the recent California debate, few people have examined the push-pull factors that determine immigration flows. Immigrants are pulled here by attractive economic and political opportunities—and they are pushed over our borders for many reasons, but mostly because of America's policy of military adventurism over the past half century. As we observe the thousands of Vietnamese, Cambodians, Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, Palestinians, and Iranians who now live in our neighborhoods, we should realize that the Pentagon's use of our tax dollars was largely responsible for driving them out of their ancestral homes and into ours.

William M. Burke
San Francisco, Calif.

"Must It Be the Rest Against the West?" addresses several deep fears that are probably felt by many in mainstream America. Unfortunately, rational discussion of these fears is difficult, because of the underlying racial and ethnic overtones. As a native-born American (not a Native American, mind you), I certainly feel entitled to the best our country offers, but not to the exclusion of my nonnative friends and neighbors.

Although immigration (legal or not) does bring to our shores a number of people who have serious problems (drugs, disease, crime, poverty), I am sure we benefit greatly from the many who have something to offer. If we wish to reduce immigration, we need to offer people a reason to stay where they are.

Peter L. Steyn
West Caldwell, N.J.

Overpopulation Problems

Virginia Abernethy's "Optimism and Overpopulation" (December *Atlantic*) reflects a stunning disregard for the basics of population history. In essence, she argues that economic-development programs for less developed countries are misguided, because people have as many children as they think they can afford, so economic programs stimulate population growth. If fertility were truly a function of perceived economic resources, we would expect to find the highest fertility levels in Switzerland and Sweden, and the lowest fertility levels in Burkina Faso and Ethiopia. In fact, of course, there is a near-perfect *inverse* relationship between per capita income and fertility: those countries with the greatest resources have the fewest children. This relationship also holds within countries: in every population we know of, the middle class has lower fertility than the poor. Moreover, economic development has historically been followed by fertility decline, not fertility increase, in country after country. Although a few countries have experienced a modest bump in fertility with the onset of economic growth, sustained economic growth has always been associated with fertility decline. The main source of the population "explosion" of the past century has been not a rise in fertility but rather a decline in mortality—especially infant and child mortality.

Matthew Connelly and Paul Kennedy offer more-palatable policy prescriptions, but they are not much better than Abernethy when it comes to demography. Through most of East Asia and Latin America fertility levels have been declining rapidly for the past decade, and the pace of change has been far faster than anyone predicted. As a result, the United Nations has made repeated and dramatic downward revisions in its estimates of world population growth. Estimates from the late 1960s predicted that the human population might grow as large as 50 billion. If the current estimates of about 10 billion prove correct, then the apocalypse has been averted.

Steven Ruggles
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minn.

Re Virginia Abernethy's assertion that "the mantras of democracy, redistribution, and economic development raise expectations and fertility rates, fostering population growth . . .": Of course development efforts have increased population growth—but by reducing death rates, not by encouraging increased fertility. The ensuing surge in population growth is the temporary cost of motivating parents to begin reducing family size—an idea they cannot reasonably entertain in the face of high infant- and child-mortality rates.

It is simply preposterous to dispute the

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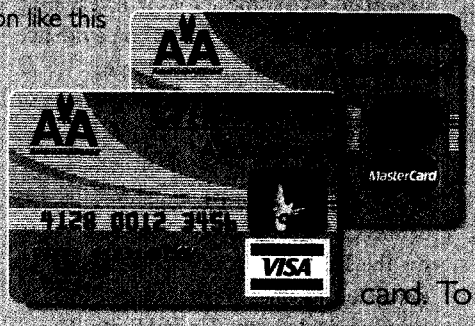

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amply demonstrated fact that declining death rates have been the primary engine of population growth in the past several centuries and especially in the post–Second World War period. Put simply, the population explosion has resulted from death control without birth control.

Much of the intuitive appeal of Abernethy's argument rests, I believe, on a purposeful confusion of conditions in poor ("underdeveloped"), high-fertility societies and in rich ("developed"), low-fertility societies. In the latter, people are generally aware of and employ effective family-planning techniques and have long been motivated to limit their family size in order to invest more in each child's preparation for life. In these circumstances an improved economic outlook can produce a desire for more children as they are seen as affordable. In the precarious conditions of most of the inhabitants of poor countries, however, children are prime cultural and economic assets, conveying status on parents and providing them with at least the possibility of added income and "social security." In the poor countries, moreover, powerful pro-natalist cultural norms have evolved to compensate for the high mortality rates prevalent in these areas. In these circumstances improved economic conditions leading to better nutrition and more education tend to lower infant and child mortality, which is the single most important prerequisite to the motivation to have fewer children—it is no longer necessary to have six or seven in order to count on two or three surviving.

Richard L. Clinton
Oregon State University
Corvallis, Oreg.

Virginia Abernethy's article on population was brilliant, and one of the most important I've come across in a very long time. An enormous amount of evidence supports her thesis. For example,

• Isn't the high population growth rate of the Marshall Islands (about 4.1 or 4.2 percent annually) a result of large transfer payments by the United States (as part of the Compact of Free Association and for the Department of Defense's use of Kwajalein) and the right (under the compact) to reside in the United States?

• Isn't Gaza's through-the-roof rate of population growth (about five percent a year) attributable to the handouts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and to a strong belief among many Palestinians that Israel will cease to exist and that they will soon have a much expanded niche?

• Somalia throughout the millennia had a relatively stable population, one that fluctuated a bit but adapted itself to that difficult and often harsh environment. In recent years, particularly in the years between independence (1960) and collapse (1991–1992), the population growth rate averaged 2.6 or 2.7 percent *and* Somalia received enormous amounts of foreign assistance—what I've been told was the highest per capita level in all of Africa. In 1993, with large amounts of food and other assistance coming in, the population growth rate went up to three percent!

Stuart J. D. Schwartzstein
Washington, D.C.

Virginia Abernethy replies:

Does fertility really decline with economic prosperity? Evidence suggests otherwise. The purported causal relationships of the demographic-transition model are precisely what I challenge. I agree with Steven Ruggles and Richard Clinton just to this extent: one model is wrong.

Confusion arises when countries are compared at a single moment in time—a snapshot. This method does not establish causality, because it cannot show that the presumed cause comes *before* the presumed effect. In contrast, a historical perspective can trace the development of countries to where they are today.

Scandinavia, for example, passed through the crucible of poverty on its way to low fertility. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century famines—when the herring shoals stayed away, the growing season was unexpectedly short, or the timber market collapsed—in the context of a rapidly growing population led to inhibitions on new family formation. Lay and religious leaders exerted pressure for responsible childbearing, and parish registers duly document the very late average age of women at marriage.

My correspondents do not mention France, but it is particularly significant, because it led, in the early nineteenth century, the transition to a new pattern—nearly universal marriage and low fertility within marriage. This occurred while the population was overwhelmingly rural and so impoverished as to inspire Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. Child abandon-

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ment was widespread, and turnstiles facilitated the anonymous admission of newborns into orphanages, where more than half soon died, owing in part to a lack of a workable substitute for breast-feeding. France's fertility decline preceded its infant-mortality decline by decades—so the latter could not have caused the former.

Two of Western Europe's poorer countries, Spain and Italy, currently have its lowest fertility rates. But recent precipitous fertility declines have left Russia with close to the *world's* lowest rate, coinciding with a marked rise in Russian mortality rates for all ages, including infants, and general impoverishment due to underemployment and inflation.

My hypothesis, that a sense of limits leads to marital and reproductive caution, and that a perception of expanding economic opportunity encourages larger family size, explains these and other demographic developments of the past fifty years. It explains the high-fertility component of the population explosion and the widespread resistance, until recently, to planning for small family size. Decades of "economic development" aid, reckless lending, and immigration opportunities created optimistic expectations, which kept family-size targets and fertility rates high and even rising. Good-hearted people want to deny that well-intentioned efforts can go awry. Yet the population explosion in the Third World confronts us with just this tragic result.

The Great Debate

After reading about the dispute over methods of learning to read ("The Great Debate Revisited," by Art Levine, December *Atlantic*), I can't believe that *The Atlantic* dug up that old chestnut and ran it without adding anything new. Why not focus on those who are succeeding in teaching reading, not on those who are failing? The huge number of educators who believe in whole language counts for nothing. It is not something we vote on. With all the illiterates running around, see-say, look-say, whole word, whole language, memory method —whatever it's called—obviously doesn't work very well.

Your readers should learn that when success is achieved, *intensive* phonics is the reason. Phonics, when taught correctly, works! Those who write and read need to know the code. Could you imagine someone saying that you could learn Morse code the same way you learned to speak? Hardly! If you were to learn Morse code, you would learn it a letter at a time, the same as the alphabet.

Tom Pennington
Pueblo, Colo.

"Accuracy is not an essential goal of reading," says the whole-language maven Ken Goodman—which probably accounts for such frightening phenomena as people who believe that the Equal Rights Amendment contains a clause about abortion on demand, and the increasing proportion of people who call themselves "biblical literalists" and claim that the Bible supports whatever position they may espouse on any issue, without having any text to tie that position to.

All the while, lawyers and scholars who cling to the anachronistic belief that letters have sounds and words have meanings, and that it really matters whether you say "disinterested" or "uninterested," are exposed to increasing derision and scorn as obsessive nit-pickers.

Logically, that can lead only to total distrust of language as a tool of communication, which in fact is pretty much where we have arrived.

Marian H. Neudel
Chicago, Ill.

Art Levine misses the point. Maybe kids drilled in phonics do learn how to sound out words a bit faster than kids taught to read through literature. But, as a high school English teacher for the past twenty-three years, let me assure Levine that early drill in phonics is not the important factor in creating teenagers with sophisticated literacy skills.

A habit of independent reading is the critical factor that differentiates my students who can read Jane Austen with enjoyment from my students who are baffled by writers writing anything more complicated than genre fiction. Children who love reading, and acquire a habit of reading, are the students who score high on the verbal SAT exam by their senior year in high school. They are also the only students who write really well, who

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have extensive frameworks of knowledge, and who can approach their reading with a critical intelligence.

Schools could end the reading crisis in a generation if they would stop focusing on the kind of short-term gains measured in the research Levine cites, and start focusing on creating lifelong, avid readers. Kids who fall in love with books sooner or later pick up all the phonics they need. And more important, they pick up outstanding reading skills. Surely that should be our goal.

Mary Leonhardt
Concord, Mass.

Art Levine, in revisiting the Great Debate, involves *The Atlantic* in some shoddy journalism. He flatly states that I called Marilyn Adams, who authored a congressionally mandated report on beginning reading, "a vampire." I did not. Neither he nor any representative of *The Atlantic* called to check this or any other of the quotations attributed to me.

I have no doubt that Levine got this "vampire" rumor from one or more of the same sources he quotes on research, on the weaknesses of whole language, and on the marvels of direct phonics instruction over all else (whole language, language experience, look-say, hey—what's the difference?). His acceptance of that silly statement shows his lack of ability to sift the facts out of the fiction in the field of literacy research and the teaching of reading.

He laments that in one school 42 percent of pupils were below average on a standardized test. By design, 50 percent of those taking all standardized tests are below average. It's not so surprising that he also accepts outlandish claims: 98 percent of third-graders in an inner-city Houston school were scoring above grade level after one year of phonics instruction. Is that what he means by hard data? Hard to believe?

Levine asserts a great debate that is neither great nor a debate. There are many important issues in reading research and in classroom instruction. Phonics is not one of them. No whole-language researcher or teacher I know argues that phonics has no place in reading. I published a book, *Phonics Phacts*, in May of 1994, which Levine chose to ignore. A small group of experimental researchers cling to the flat-earth notion that phonics is all there is to reading. Levine chose to accept their view.

Ken Goodman
Tucson, Ariz.

Art Levine replies:

Like other true believers, whole-language adherents and their allies still seem unwilling to acknowledge any evidence that challenges their world view. They're welcome to their view, of course, but I don't think it should be imposed on the nation's schoolchildren without solid proof that their assumptions are valid. Most of these acolytes are simply repeating arguments that my article clearly rebutted with evidence, as opposed to the mere assertions of faith they continue to offer—for example, that guessing words in context is a vital reading tool. But a few correspondents make additional points that deserve rebuttal. For instance, Mary Leonhardt argues that kids who fall in love with books will pick up all the phonics they need—but as falling test scores in several areas that tried whole language indicate, children can't be expected to become avid readers if they haven't mastered the basic skills needed to read.

As for Ken Goodman, I'm a little concerned about his faulty memory. He asserts that the magazine never checked any quotations with him; in fact, according to checking logs and phone records, he spoke to a fact-checker last October, when the article was in preparation. The fact-checker carefully read back to him all the quotations I used from my interviews with him, along with some descriptive phrases about himself, and several paragraphs of surrounding text for accuracy; some wording was even modified at Goodman's request. (For example, he objected to being called the "guru" of the whole-language movement, thinking the term pejorative, and the word was deleted.) The "vampire" quotation derives from remarks made before a large audience at the annual meeting of the International Reading Association, in Atlanta, in 1990. The quotation was not read to Goodman, having already been verified by the checker with people who attended the meeting. It's not hard to find people who were in the audience and remember the incident.

Goodman says that the pro-phonics researchers and studies I cited in my article claim that "phonics is all there is to reading." No. The whole point of the article—and the view of the authorities I quoted—is that a balanced approach is needed, one that incorporates both meaningful reading *and* systematic phonics instruction. To imply that their view or mine favors mindless rote phonics instruction and nothing else is an example of the kind of excess that mars the whole-language movement.

Goodman's dismissal of some of my data is unwarranted. For example, the 42 percent figure he ridicules misstates what my article said: that 42 percent of the students in Cape Elizabeth "read below grade level" after whole language was introduced—that is, below the skill level expected of second-graders—not, as he asserts, that 42 percent were "below average." He also dismisses my report that 98 percent read at grade level in a Houston inner-city school; that figure was based on interviews with the principal and newspaper accounts, and was confirmed by other educational experts.

Win Some, Lose Some

Ralph Lombreglia's short story "Somebody Up There Likes Me" (December *Atlantic*) had me laughing out loud with its humor and fresh take on the boy-meets-girl, boy-loses-girl theme. Not only does the leading man win back the love of his wife, but he gets the computer, too—the two things in modern life that bring a man true joy.

Michael P. Aabram
Chicago, Ill.

This is to protest the story by E. Annie Proulx, "A Country Killing," in your November issue. This is a witless story of wretched people doing horrible things, with no discernible point. As far as I can see, it is about degradation and violence, with no redeeming literary or philosophical value. There are stories about wretchedness and violence—Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is one, as is William Faulkner's *Sanctuary*—that have something of literary excellence, with some philosophical overtones and reflections about the human condition. Proulx's story has neither.

William Cowan
Smith Falls, Ont.

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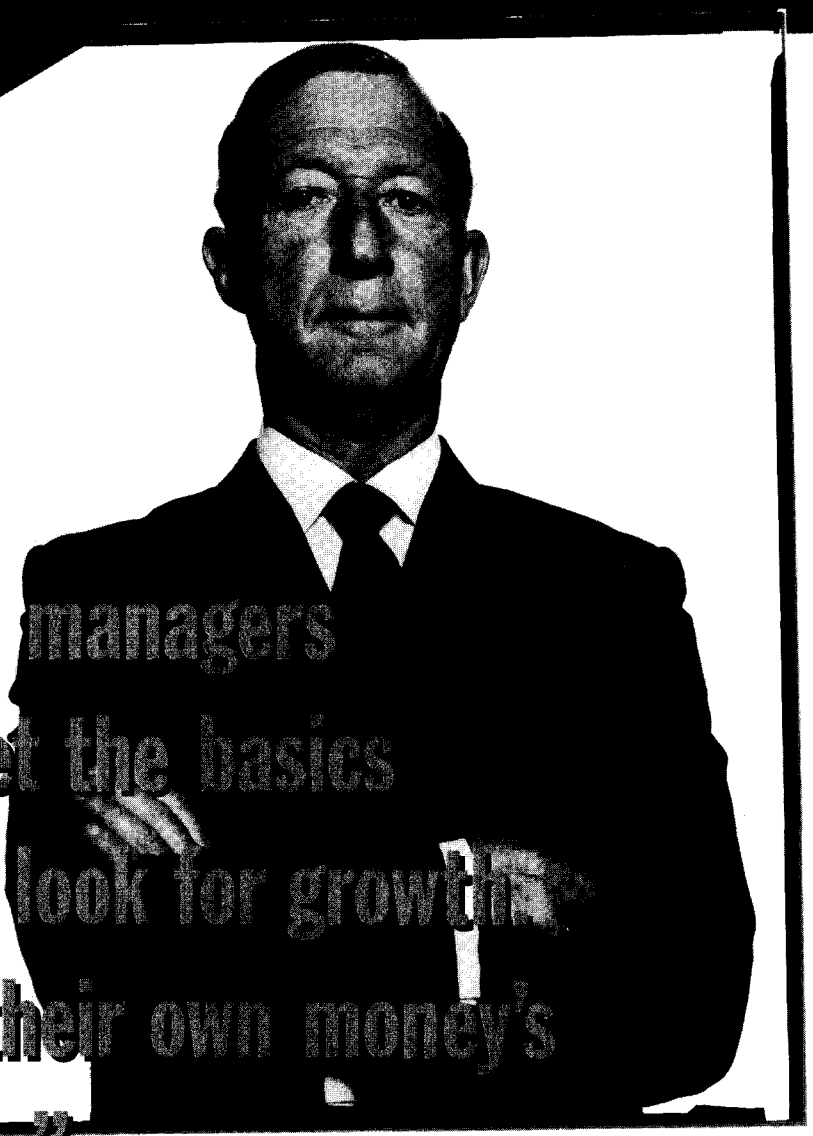

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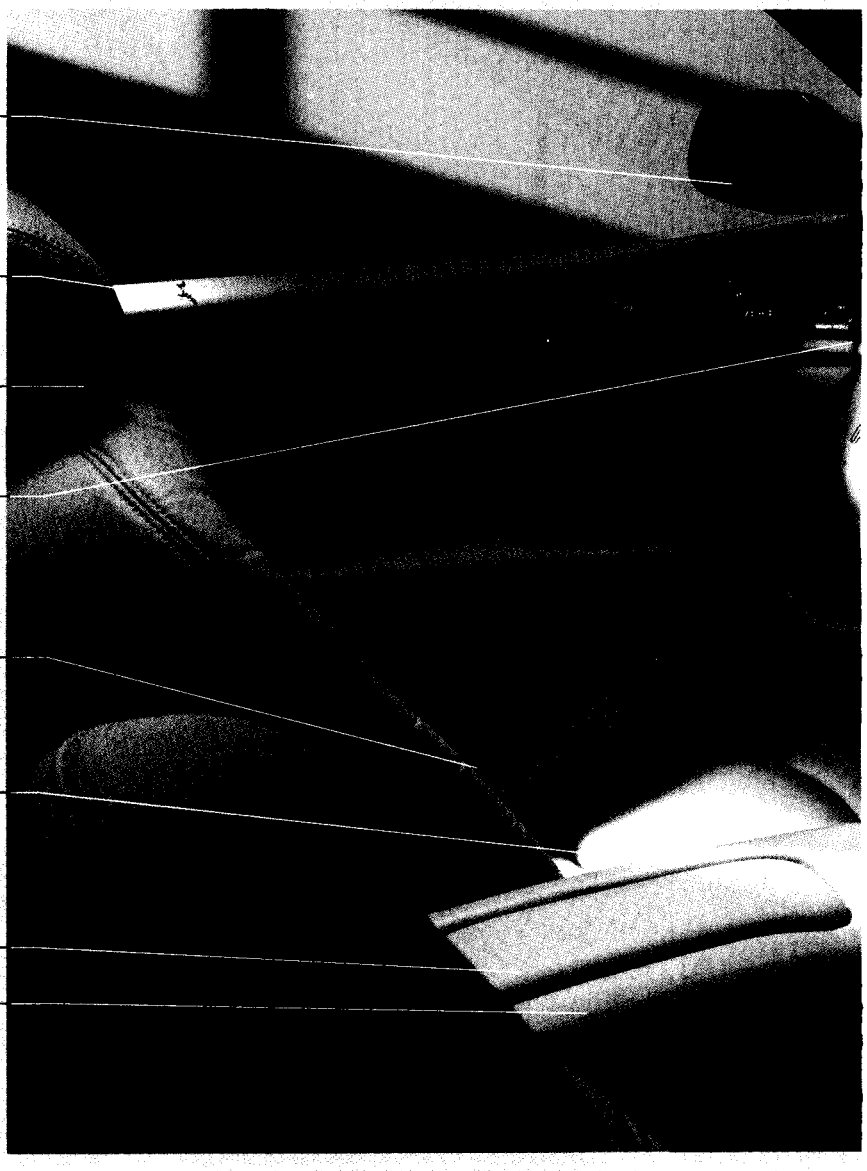

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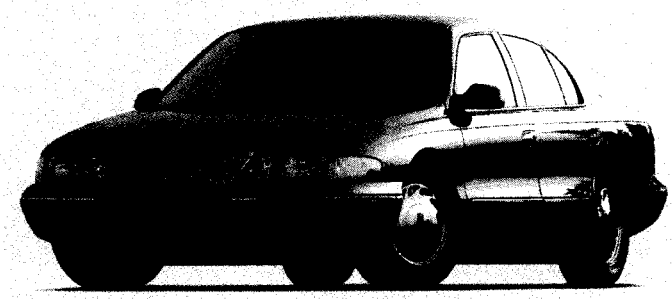

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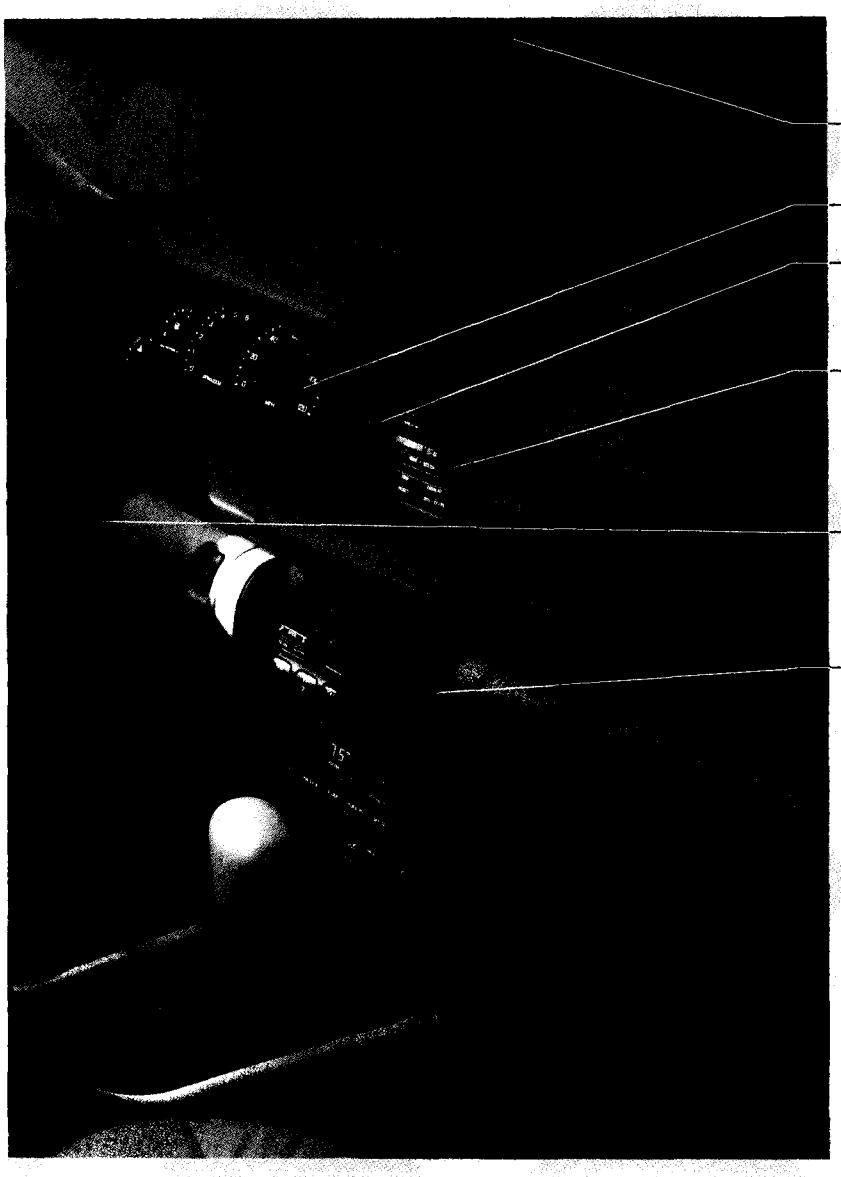

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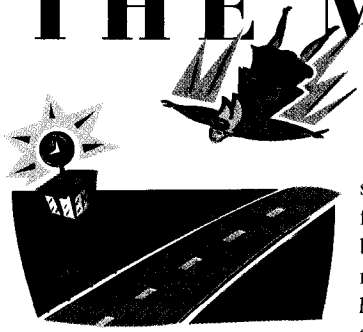
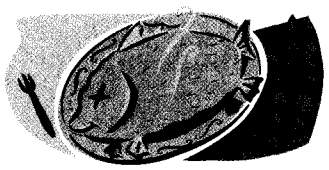


Health & Safety

March **1**, starting today the nation's 85,000 flight attendants get a long-awaited rest, as a Federal Aviation Administration regulation limiting the hours they may work without a break goes into effect. The new law, intended to ensure alertness in the event of an emergency, stipulates that in most cases attendants may work no more than fourteen hours at a stretch, with a break of at least nine hours between shifts. Flight attendants are the last "safety-sensitive" airplane workers to win such limits. They began lobbying for them in 1978, when airline deregulation expanded the system of routing flights through a central location, or hub, which in turn led to longer shifts because of waits at hubs. The argument that flight attendants are primarily safety workers has long historical roots: the first airline stewardesses were registered nurses.

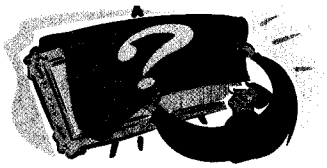
Food

March **1**, Ash Wednesday: Lent begins. For the next six Fridays observant Catholics around the world will adhere to a menu of vegetables and fish—except for observant Catholics in Venezuela, privy to the dubious luxury of meat in the form of the capybara, a fur-covered indigenous rodent that resembles a hundred-pound guinea pig. The capybara's partly webbed feet provided a loophole for sixteenth-century churchmen in the New World, who classified the creature as a fish and won dispensation for the Lenten eating of its flesh. The chances that the capybara will become a hit on the open market anytime soon are slim: the hunting of capybaras is restricted to a short season, and resistance elsewhere to rodent meat is formidable. Some zoologists, however, argue that because of certain evolutionary distinctions, capybaras, along with guinea pigs, nutrias, and chinchillas, may be less closely related to rats and other rodents than their appearance suggests—a distinction that could eventually broaden our views about what is palatable.



The Skies

March **13**, the planet for which this month is named—Mars—can be seen above the waxing Moon tonight. **16**, Full Moon, also known this month as the Chaste, Sap, or Awakening Moon. **20**, at 9:14 P.M. EST, the Vernal Equinox: Spring begins. Today the Sun rises nearly due east and sets nearly due west. **27**, Venus lies below the waning Moon in the early-morning sky.



Arts & Letters

Visitors to St. Petersburg's Hermitage Museum this month will get the world's first glimpse in 50 years of some 70 French Impressionist and post-Impressionist paintings long believed to have been destroyed in the Second World War. The paintings are among millions of works and relics taken from German collections by Soviet occupying forces. Stashed throughout Russia amid great secrecy, these caches have begun to surface since the breakup of the Soviet Union. The centerpiece of this month's exhibit will be Degas's *Place de la Concorde*; the Hermitage has so far said little about what else will be included, presumably to prevent former owners from pressing for restitution before the show. (Whether the paintings will be returned afterward is an open question.) Meanwhile, Germany, Turkey, and Greece are all vying for the return of nearly 10,000 Trojan artifacts that were excavated by a German archaeologist in the 1870s, spirited out of Berlin by the Red Army, and rediscovered in Moscow's Pushkin Museum in 1993.

Government

March **31**, the Social Security Administration, until now a division of the Department of Health and Human Services, becomes a separate agency today. Its independence—the result of legislation passed unanimously by Congress last year—is meant, among other things, to bolster public confidence in the agency and to lessen the bureaucracy attending it, so as to facilitate reforms. The agency's new status will have no effect on standard benefits or payroll deductions; however, the enabling legislation places new restrictions on payments to those disabled as a result of substance abuse. Also beginning this month smoking will be banned for all prison employees and prisoners in Texas, including condemned inmates desiring a last cigarette.

Environment

This month more than half a million sandhill cranes (and perhaps 80,000 bird watchers) will descend on an 80-mile stretch of Nebraska's Platte River, the narrowest part of the Central Flyway, which links avian wintering grounds in the nation's Southwest with nesting grounds in the Arctic and Siberia. Each spring the birds

spend about a month here, fueling up for the coming nesting season. However, the habitat they depend on—the primary migratory feeding and roosting site within reach of most of the world's sandhill cranes—has dwindled to 20 percent of its original area, a casualty of irrigation and hydropower. There is, however, reason for hope: the U.S. Forest Service has mandated that starting this year reservoirs at the headwaters of the South Platte, in Colorado, must devote a fixed, if small, percent of their budgets to supporting riverine habitats, and public and private agencies are securing and restoring large tracts of wetlands along the river.

125 Years Ago

The philosopher Henry James, writing in the March, 1870, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "By most persons the sanctity of marriage is thought to be a merely instituted thing, depending upon some arbitrary divine decree. Others, more rational, deem it to inhere in the uses which marriage subserves to the family tie. And this is true, but it is only a part of the truth. For the family tie itself is not a finality. It is only the rude acorn out of which that great tree is predestined to spring, which we call society, and which will one day melt all the warring families of the earth into the impartial unity of its embrace. Thus the true sanctity of marriage inheres at bottom in its social uses. It is the sole nursery of the social sentiment in the human bosom."

Illustrations by Matt Foster

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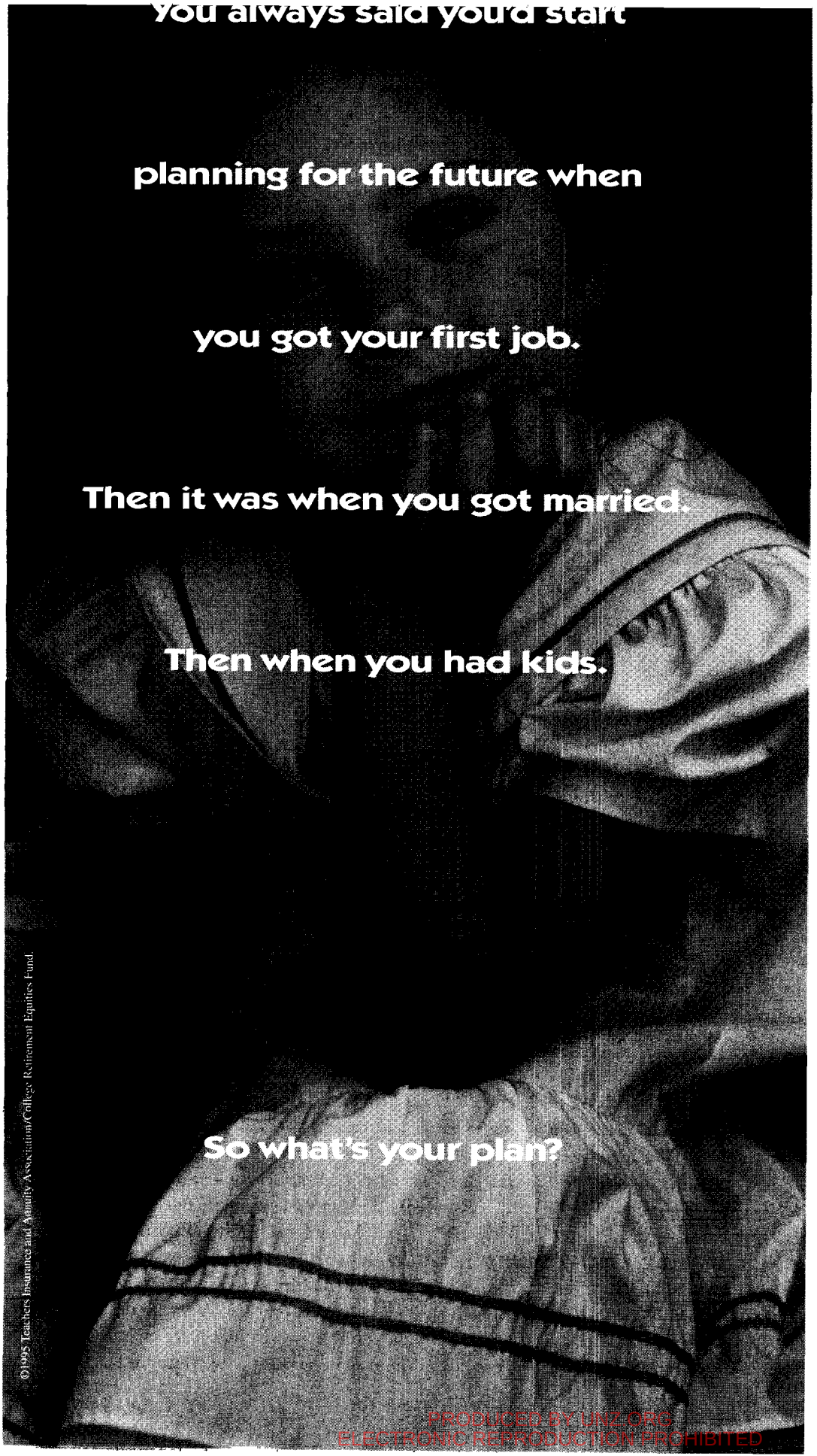

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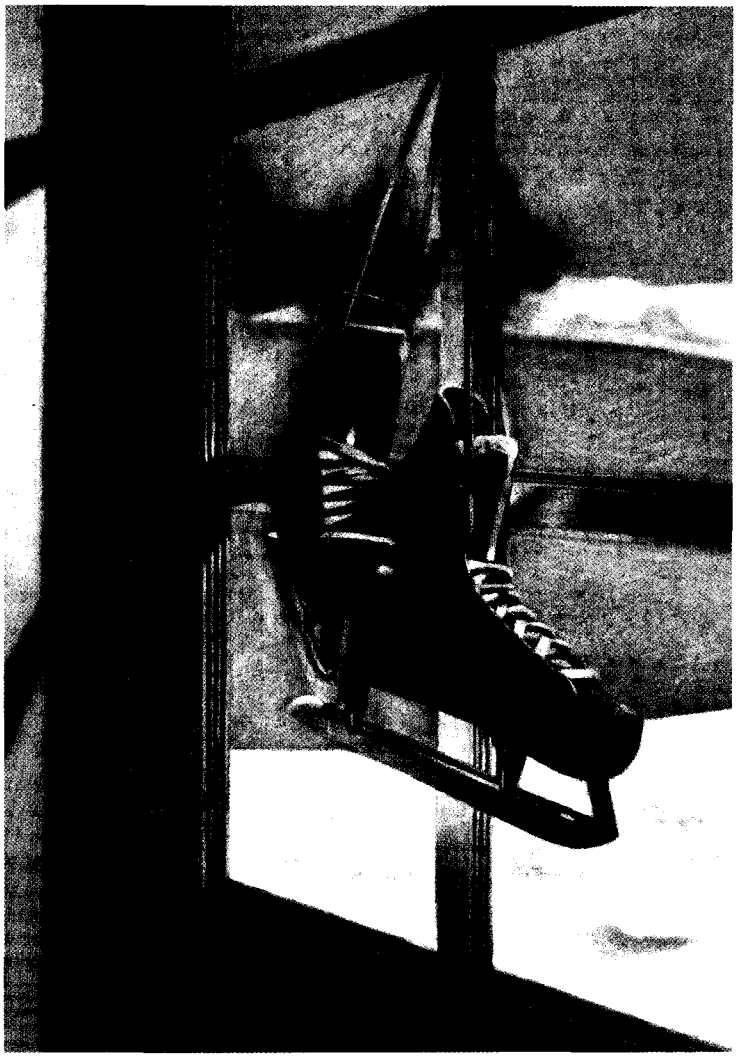
How the Lawyers Stole Winter

Pond skating in the changed context of childhood



WHEN I was a boy, my friends and I would come home from school each day, change our clothes (because we were not allowed to wear "play clothes" to school), and go outside until dinnertime. In the early 1960s in Medford, a city on the outskirts of Boston, that was pretty much what everybody did. Sometimes there might be flute lessons, or an organized Little League game, but usually not. Usually we kids went out and played.

In winter, on our way home from the Gleason School, we would go past Brooks Pond to check the ice. By throwing heavy stones onto it, hammering it with downed branches, and, finally, jumping on it, we could figure out if the ice was ready for skating. If it was, we would hurry home to grab our skates, our sticks, and whatever other gear we had, and then return to play hockey for the rest of the day. When the streetlights came on, we knew it was time to jam our cold, stiff feet back into our green rubber snow boots and get home for dinner.

I had these memories in mind recently when I moved, with my wife and two young boys, into a house near a lake even closer to Boston, in the city of Newton. As soon as Crystal Lake froze over, I grabbed my skates and headed out. I was not the first one there, though: the lawyers had beaten me to the lake. They had warned the town recreation department to put it off limits. So I found a sign that said DANGER. THIN ICE. NO SKATING.

Knowing a thing or two about words myself, I put my own gloss on the sign. I took it to mean *When the ice is thin, there is danger and there should be no skating.* Fair enough, I thought, but I knew that the obverse was also true: *When the ice is thick, it is safe and there should be skating.* Finding the ice plenty thick, I laced up my skates and glided out onto the miraculous glassy surface of the frozen lake. My wife, a native of Manhattan, would not let me take our two boys with me. But for as long as I could, I enjoyed the free, open-air delight of skating as it should be. After a few days others joined me, and we became an outlaw band of skaters.

What we were doing was once the heart of winter in New England—and a lot of other places, too. It was clean, free exercise that needed no StairMasters, no health clubs, no appointments, and hardly any gear. Sadly, it is in danger of passing away. Nowadays it seems that every city and town and almost all property holders are so worried about liability and lawsuits that they simply throw up a sign or a fence and declare that henceforth there shall be no skating, and that's the end of it.

by Christopher B. Daly

Illustration by Martha Anne Booth

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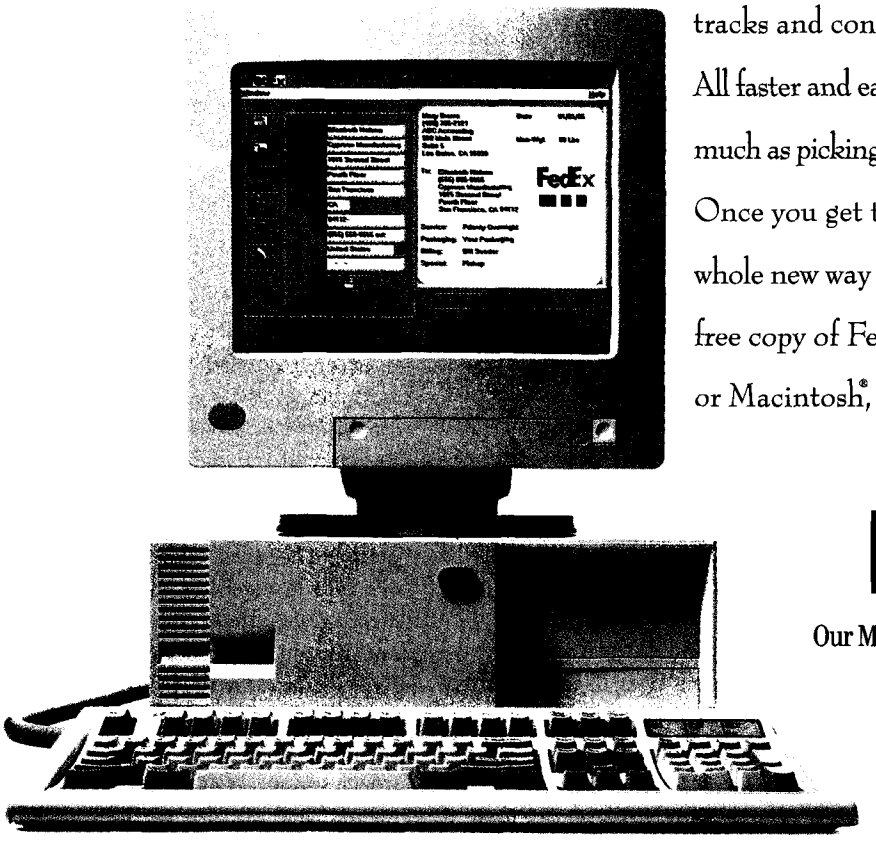

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As a result, kids today live in a world of leagues, rinks, rules, uniforms, adults, and rides—rides here, rides there, rides everywhere. It is not clear that they are better off; in some ways they are clearly *not* better off.

▪ ▪ ▪

When I was a boy skating on Brooks Pond, there were no grown-ups around. Once or twice a year, on a weekend day or a holiday, some parents might come by with a thermos of hot cocoa. Maybe they would build a fire (which we were forbidden to do), and we would gather round.

But for the most part the pond was the domain of children. In the absence of adults, we made and enforced our own rules. We had hardly any gear—just some borrowed hockey gloves, some hand-me-down skates, maybe an elbow pad or two—so we played a clean form of hockey, with no high-sticking, no punching, and almost no checking. A single fight could ruin the whole afternoon. Indeed, as I remember it, thirty years later, it was the purest form of hockey I ever saw—until I got to see the Russian national team play the game.

But before we could play, we had to check the ice. We became serious junior meteorologists, true connoisseurs of cold. We learned that the best weather for pond skating is plain, clear cold, with starry nights and no snow. (Snow not only mucks up the skating surface but also insulates the ice from the colder air above.) And we learned that moving water, even the gently flowing Mystic River, is a lot less likely to freeze than standing water. So we skated only on the pond. We learned all the weird whooping and cracking sounds that ice makes as it expands and contracts, and thus when to leave the ice.

Do kids learn these things today? I don't know. How would they? We don't let them. Instead we post signs. Ruled by lawyers, cities and towns everywhere try to eliminate their legal liability. But try as they might, they cannot eliminate the underlying risk. Liability is a social construct; risk is a natural fact. When it is cold enough, ponds freeze. No sign or fence or ordinance can change that.

In fact, by focusing on liability and not teaching our kids how to take risks, we are making their world more dangerous. When we were children, we had to learn to evaluate risks and handle them on our own. We had to learn, quite literally, to test the waters. As a result, we grew up to be savvier about ice and ponds than any kid could be who has skated only under adult supervision on a rink.

When I was a boy, despite the risks we took on the ice no one I knew ever drowned. The only people I heard about who drowned were graduate students at Harvard or MIT who came from the tropics and were living through their first winters. Not knowing (after all, how could they?) about ice on moving water, they would innocently venture out onto the half-frozen Charles River, fall through, and die. They were literally out of their element.

Are we raising a generation of children who will be out of their element? And if so, what can we do about it? We cannot just roll back the calendar. I cannot tell my six-year-old to head down to the lake by himself to play all afternoon—if for no other reason than that he would not find twenty or thirty other kids there, full of the collective wisdom about cold and ice that they had inherited, along with hockey equipment, from their older brothers and sisters. Somewhere along the line that link got broken.

The whole setting of childhood has changed. We cannot change it again overnight. I cannot send my children out by themselves yet, but at least some of the time I can go out there with them. Maybe that is a start.

▪ ▪ ▪

As for us, last winter was a very unusual one. We had ferocious cold (near-zero temperatures on many nights) and tremendous snows (about a hundred inches in all). Eventually a strange thing happened. The town gave in—sort of. Sometime in January the recreation department "opened" a section of the lake, and even dispatched a snowplow truck to clear a good-sized patch of ice. The boys and I skated during the rest of winter. Ever vigilant, the town officials kept the THIN ICE signs up, even though their own truck could safely drive on the frozen surface. And they brought in "lifeguards" and all sorts of rules about the hours during which we could skate and where we had to stay.

But at least we were able to skate in the open air, on real ice.

And it was still free.

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Schwab's of Memphis

You might not actually need anything this dry-goods emporium sells, but you do need to visit it if you're passing through town

by Jane and Michael Stern

BEALE Street isn't what it used to be. There are no more craps games in the shadows of the alleys, no more bluesmen along the sidewalk wailing songs of good love or bad luck for spare change. The reefer smoke that once wafted from the juke joints after dark blew away long ago, and the dozen pawnshops that lined the north side of the raucous thoroughfare are gone. Urban renewal has made Beale Street bright and wholesome, and new kinds of businesses have come to offer safely packaged Memphis soul for tourists. Gift shops and nightclubs decorated to look like the old juke joints now dominate what used to be an anything-goes district, where W. C. Handy established the blues and Elvis found his blue-suede shoes.

A store called A. Schwab occupies the only building on the street not owned by the city government, and the contrast between it and the sanitized new businesses is striking. Inside the ancient dry-goods emporium, where a strange, old-fashioned calm prevails, the walls are pale seafoam-green and the aroma is a nostalgic blend of cotton fabrics, simple soaps, inexpensive perfumes, and worn wood fixtures. Because of its age, Schwab's attracts its fair share of Beale Street tourists, who come to marvel at the creaking floor and the immense inventory of odd, outdated merchandise. Most customers, though, are not tourists: they are Memphians who know and trust old Abram Schwab and his family business. As has been the case since their fathers and grandfathers rode mules to town from farms in the Mississippi Delta, the majority of Schwab's customers are black. They come to the Beale Street relic, as they always have, to buy just about anything they need in the way of overalls or garter trolleys, Lover's Moon perfume or Big Gals knee-length panties, gents' stingy-brim porkpie hats or ladies' felt hats for church on Sunday, mojo candles to burn when they need to remove a jinx or make someone fall in love. The store motto is "If you can't find it at Schwab's, you're better off without it."

Much of what you can find at Schwab's is not sold at Kmart: celluloid collars, straight razors, Hollywood hair clips for making a perfect marcel wave. Ladies' housecoats, on a long rack upstairs, are full-cut and sturdy, in brightly colored gingham and calico prints reminiscent of a 1948 Sears catalogue—honest clothes for working-class women. Nondesigner men's jeans are available in waist sizes that range from twenty-eight to seventy inches. Odd-lot and surplus items include foam visors, at a dollar each, imprinted with miscellaneous logos: "10th Anniversary Pan Am Games, Indianapolis, 1987"; "University Food Service, U.C. Santa Cruz." Also in the headgear department are three-foot-wide Mexican straw sombreros, pith helmets, and fake-fur coonskin caps with snap-on tails. If you need a gnarled-wood shepherd's staff, a Fiesta Ware factory-second dinner plate for two dollars, a white padded living-room Bible, or a pair of extra-wide tennis shoes from the five-dollar bin, Schwab's has it.

Above, Abram Schwab (right) shows off his store's "museum"

Photographs by Murray Riss

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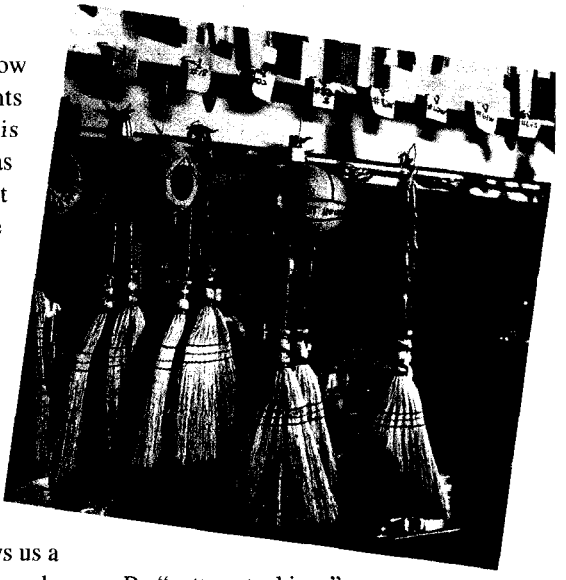
Abram Schwab, who is seventy-one and started working in the family store when he was ten, knows every one of the several thousand items he carries. "I don't feel like I am at work when I am here," he says, grinning. "This is home to me." On the floor every day from nine to five, outfitted for action in a denim apron, his navy serge slacks held up by elastic suspenders that he boasts are made exclusively for his store, Schwab is ubiquitous. A pink-skinned cherub of a man, with a halo of white hair and a teenager's giggle, he greets regular customers ("There are still some who are older than I am!"), carries boxes full of stock, rearranges displays, and buttonholes strangers so that he can tell them about the history of Schwab's, of Beale Street, and of the Jews in Memphis and the South. Anybody who is Jewish is immediately taken to his musty cubicle in back, where a wall is covered with a vast genealogical diagram listing in minuscule handwriting throngs of his relatives on a family tree. He is crestfallen when the several Sterns charted there are unknown to us, but when we tell him we live back east, his eyes light up. "My sister is a shrink in New York," he says. "I can get it for you wholesale if you want to go crazy."

SCHWAB'S has been a family business since Abraham Schwab founded it in 1876. It was during the reign of Abraham's three sons, sometime in the 1920s, that the store expanded its inventory beyond dry goods and cornered the local market in voodoo talismans. "We used to sell incense to the fish joints around here that stunk," Schwab (the third generation) told us as he waved a Protection From My Enemies candle in the air. "They said, 'Don't you have oil to go with the incense?' So my uncle sent to Chicago for scented oils. He didn't have any idea what they were used for—he just thought to make a place smell nice, to take the fish odor away. Ever since then we have sold incense, oils, and candles for casting and removing spells."

Schwab beams when he explains the function of each magic candle he sells. His manifest enjoyment of the candles seems neither sarcastic nor naive. It is hard to know just what he thinks when he points out that a DUME candle, which is black wax inside a tallboy glass, has blank lines on the outside so that you can write the names of people you hate. "This is the candle of last resort," he says with a chuckle. "You don't like some folks down in city hall, you inscribe them here, light the wick, and carry the candle downtown. By the time you get there, city hall will crumble to the ground. DUME means 'Death Unto My Enemies.' It's my best seller." He shows us a Double Action Reversible candle, made of purple and black wax, and criticizes a local judge who sentenced two men to prison for practicing malicious voodoo. What a waste of time and taxpayers' money! Had the judge simply lit a candle like this one, all the men's evil spells would have spun around and come back at them, twice as bad. Some other practical candles and room sprays sold at Schwab's include Law Stay Away, Pay Me!!! Now!, I CAN You Can't, and the ever-popular Come to Me. Scented oils work more directly, endowing their user with personal power. "You are going to play cards tonight," Schwab says, hypothesizing, and rummages in a cardboard box for a vial of Money Drawing Oil. "Rub some on your hands and win! And if you don't win, I have four other brands of Money Drawing Oil for you to try."

Oils and candles are displayed to the left as you enter Schwab's front door; shoes to the right; ashtrays far left, in back; ladies' underwear upstairs, center aisle. The geography is constant. Schwab wouldn't think of changing the configuration, the way modern stores do to rekindle shoppers' interest. "So many of our customers are elderly people," he explains. "As you get older, you can't see too well, your memory doesn't work so well. A lot of things don't work so well. You come in for cotton stockings, you go to where the cotton stockings are, which is where they have always been."



By "cotton stockings" he means hosiery in the old-time shade of faded fleshy beige, made to clip onto a garter belt—sturdy, comfortable, extremely unfashionable, and a best seller here for about fifty years. "We get a wholesaler to order them special from the manufacturer, and they make me swear I will buy them all," Schwab says with glee. "No one else wants them!" Some good old products, he laments, have become unavailable despite his promise to stock them forever. Radio Girl and Atomic Bomb perfumes, which at ten cents a bottle sold well for decades, are now gone: the company that used to make them changed hands, and the new owners decided to modernize their line, leaving Schwab and his steady customers in the lurch. More recently he had good luck selling a novelty item called the Turd Bird—a varnished piece of horse manure decorated with feathers. But he sold out and couldn't get more, because the manufacturer stopped making them.

Another thing that has changed at Schwab's is the music department. As recently as a dozen years ago you could ask the clerk to play a platter before you decided whether to buy it. The selection was fabulous, including rhythm and blues on such legendary labels as Okeh, Vocalion, and Sun. No more. In place of the 78-rpm and 45-rpm discs in which Schwab's once specialized are cassettes and compact discs. However, in the grand clutter of merchandise between the music counter and the Figurfit queen-size underwear we did find a bin loaded with Decca 78s, still in their brown-paper sleeves, selling for a dollar each: "Oh! My Achin' Heart" by the Mills Brothers; "Don't Hesitate Too

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Long" by Lucky Millinder and His Orchestra; "I Got It Bad (and That Ain't Good)" by Ella Fitzgerald.

SCHWAB savors his role as curator of local history. He has established a "museum" on the mezzanine of the store—tables heaped with old newspapers, photographs, and junk from yesteryear. The basement has become a repository of memorabilia he picked up while Memphis modernized. "Look here," he says, flipping back the lid of a chest-high cabinet with a three-part sink on top. "I am the only Jew in Memphis to have a baptismal font!" He explains that good Catholics go to mass every day, and that there used to be lots of neighborhood churches for their convenience. He got his font when one was razed. He reaches into a burlap sack, pulling out a boll of short-staple cotton while expounding on the importance in Memphis history of cotton's growers, pickers, and traders. Schwab extracts the seed, saying, "This is what a cotton gin does," and tells us to grab hold of one end of the white puff. He spins the other end between his thumb and forefinger as he walks backward. Between us a yard of soft cotton thread is created.

As Schwab strolls through the basement, his eyes glisten with the joy of the antiquity it holds. He points out an old cream-separating machine and the handwritten lactation summary of a cow named Jane. He admires a formal portrait of a local casket maker, which he rescued when a nearby photo studio went out of business. He shows us a pile of some of the original bricks used to pave Beale Street, now scattered on his basement floor. ("Good footing for people and horses in any weather.") He delights in the cobwebs clinging to the three-by-twelve beams that have sustained the store for more than a century. "I started to remove them one day, and then thought, no, these are legitimate cobwebs; they deserve to stay." His brow knits when he comes upon a stack of weathered boards that he rescued when a venerable shop on the other side of Beale was condemned and destroyed. "Any piece I didn't steal, they took to the dump," he says with disgust. "They should have saved every brick and every board from this old street. Beale is history, and history should not be thrown away."

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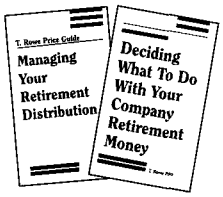

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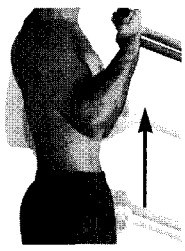

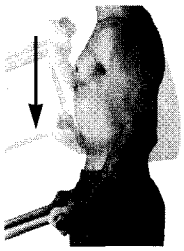

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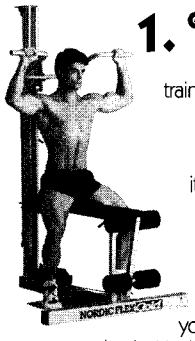

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Seeds of Doubt

A successful donor-insemination service catering to heterosexual single women and lesbians raises some difficult questions

by Susan V. Seligson

On its tenth anniversary, not long ago, the nonprofit Sperm Bank of California threw itself a party. About 150 people gathered for the event at the Sequoia Lodge, a rustic recreational facility in the Oakland hills. There were speeches, an awards ceremony, and a clown to entertain the children, most of whom owed their existence to the contents of tiny vials suspended in drums of liquid nitrogen. The mothers of these children helped themselves to cake and socialized a bit, but, according to one observer, many spent the afternoon scrutinizing one another's offspring for any genetic resemblance to their own.

The coziness of this gathering, at which possible siblings toddled oblivious among one another, is the hallmark of this pioneering full-service sperm bank. In the organization's office suite, which occupies the first floor of a former funeral home on a drab stretch of Telegraph Avenue in Oakland, anonymous donors are often referred to by clients as "dads," and impregnated clients have left tender thank-you notes for them. Founded on principles of reproductive freedom by a group of feminist health educators, the Sperm Bank of California was the first sperm bank in the nation to deal not only with doctors but also with would-be mothers, including heterosexual single women and lesbians. The Sperm Bank of California, which is planning to move to Berkeley in the spring, was also the first to allow women to select their own donors on the basis of weight, coloring, ethnicity, and blood type from a quarterly coded list; to teach women to inseminate themselves; and to enable women pregnant by donor sperm to review the donor's medical file. Even today only one other sperm bank, Pacific Reproductive Services, in San Francisco, offers comparable services directly to women.

The sperm bank's boldest innovation by far has been its "Yes" donor program, in which donors agree to make their identities known to their offspring, at the children's request, when those children reach age eighteen. About 60 percent of the 3,000 or so vials of sperm released each year come from "Yes" donors. The first "Yes" child will come of age in the summer of 2001. To learn the donor's name, address, telephone number, Social Security number, and date and place of birth, the child—and only the child—may petition the sperm bank in a notarized letter. Only Pacific Reproductive Services has initiated a similar program.

Though "Yes" donors sign a contract, this legally unprecedented arrangement relies heavily on good faith—the donor, who may be a college student, agrees to inform the sperm bank every time he moves on. The sperm bank strives to make it clear that agreeing to release his identity does not legally make the "Yes" donor any more of a father than are those whose sperm remains forever anonymous.

This deal may seem laden with contradictions, some of them ominous. But Barbara Raboy, the director of the sperm bank, believes that the identity-release option is a boon to the rights of the child and "fills a gap" for self-inseminators—particularly the 40 percent of the sperm bank's clients who are single heterosexuals—who

Illustration by Bea Weidner

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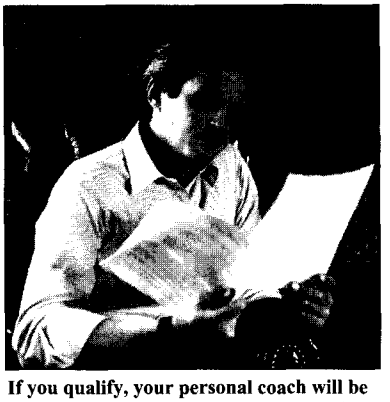

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Harlie Cooley, Rancho Mirage, CA, writes, "I truly feel my coach is aware of me and my writing. It's just like having a private tutor."

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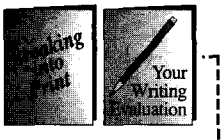

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**The testimonials in this ad were provided voluntarily, without remuneration, by Long Ridge Writers Group students, from 1989 to 1994.*

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feel a bit uneasy about raising their kids in the shadow of a huge question mark.

"We started this program because our clients wanted it," says Raboy, a plain-spoken Joan Baez look-alike who was one of the sperm bank's founders. "I think it helps the women with their decision-making, helps relieve a burden they put on themselves." As for the "Yes" donors, Raboy says they do it for the kids ("If they were such a child, *they* would want to know . . ."), but she can't deny that they're also yielding to some emotional pull within themselves. "We never insist on complete emotional detachment," she says. "We tell donors, Look, at some level you must make some separation. They must understand that they're not going to raise these kids. But we want them to care what happens. We're saying, There may be as many as ten kids who *might* contact you, so please keep in touch with us. We can't say any more, because we really don't know."

Her son randomly coos the word "daddy," Linda reported with a slight but unmistakable shudder.

THE sperm bank's casual, homey embrace brings a surprising levity and incongruous sentimentality to its proceedings. Entering and exiting through a door that's separate from but tantalizingly close to the one used by the anonymous donors, ovulating working women can come in on their lunch breaks to inseminate themselves amid floral prints in a womblike chamber. Donors produce ejaculate in bedrooms reminiscent of those in quaint country inns. As I looked on, a charismatic lab technician with dreadlocks peered into a microscope at some particularly vigorous sperm and exclaimed, "*Awww-right!*" to the specimen's grinning donor.

Perhaps it's the mood of the place, then, that has client after client speaking affectionately of "my donor" and pleading in vain with Raboy to see his photograph. It's the spirit of openness here that inspired two women, both mothers by self-insemination, to call Raboy's office demanding to know if their children were siblings (they weren't). And maybe it's the easy intimacy between staff and regular donors that inspired Frank, a three-year "Yes" donor, to think about marking on his calendar the birthdays of the babies he's fathered, babies whose sex he is technically not permitted to know, though Frank says he heard from a lab technician that "most of my babies are girls."

An athletic, unmarried thirty-six-year-old biding his time at menial university jobs in hopes of becoming a published writer, Frank told me he is full of anticipation about that "knock on the door" looming in his future, likening it to "a surprise package eighteen years from now." He envisions a friendship with these children, and admits having to chase away thoughts of how they look, what kind of people they are. "I hope they like me," he adds. About one thing he's fairly certain: they will get in touch with him. "*I* would. And if they're anything like me, they will too."

Although such an admission seems perfectly reasonable to Frank, its ambiguity is not lost on Bruce Wilder, a physician and an attorney in the Section of Family Law of the American Bar Association. The arrangement is not unlike open adoption, but Wilder can imagine legal tangles down the road. He offers a scenario in which a single mother dies or becomes incapacitated while her child is still young. "I don't want to be an alarmist, but I can see the state saying, We have this sperm donor who has agreed to some type of relationship with the child at some point. The state may say, *You* make the support payments." Those two short paragraphs in his contract that make him a "Yes" donor say something about the donor's intent, and could pave the way for custody or estate battles, Wilder says. In his own musings about those fateful meetings, Frank has considered the possibility that his offspring might come to him for money. "I think that expectation is unrealistic," he says, "but if I could, I think I would assist them in some way."

As for the effects of this arrangement on a child's fragile psyche, it's too early to say what they may be, though studies are under way—including one that focuses on the Sperm Bank of California, which is being conducted by a psychologist at the University of Virginia. Donors' Offspring, a national support group based in Sarcoxie, Missouri, claims that since 1981 it has attracted tormented souls playing every part in the artificial-insemination drama—donors seeking their offspring, offspring yearning to meet their donors, inseminated mothers struggling for words of explanation. Candace Turner, the group's founder and a donor-insemination baby who has searched for her biological father for a decade, works the Donahue–*Hard Copy* circuit and tends toward theatrical hyperbole ("All donor-insemination babies have been emotionally, sexually, or physically abused"), but she did read me letters and cite specific cases of adult "DI" offspring who are hurt and perplexed that their biological fathers deliberately contributed so minimally to their lives.

For a sperm-bank client I'll call Linda, however, the donor father of her four-year-old son looms as a kind of benign ghost to Linda's Mrs. Muir. A forty-year-old single accountant and a lapsed Protestant who found the sperm bank in the Oakland Yellow Pages, Linda will instruct her son, when he asks, to say "I'm a donor-insemination baby." But she intends to raise him with an awareness of his Jewish "background"—as if the thawed ejaculate of a Jewish donor confers one. As Bruce Wilder commented later, women like Linda want to give their child "a little bit of a father."

The fair-haired cherub in the studio photograph that Linda handed me as we talked is too young to ask pointed questions, but he randomly coos the word "daddy," his mother reported with a slight but unmistakable shudder. Linda lost touch with her own father after her parents divorced, when she was three. Her mother remarried several years later, but at thirty-three Linda sought out her biological father, and, she says, they've since grown quite close. Yet only minutes after this revelation, when asked to speculate about whether her son would try to contact *his* father (who is not a "Yes" donor), she replied without a trace of irony that as a well-loved child he probably would not, since the mere "physical aspect of being related" has no real importance.

"Why, then," I asked, "did you search for your own father?"

"Curiosity, I guess."

"Won't your son be just as curious?"

(Continued on page 38)

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MARCH
1995

Arts ENTERTAINMENT PREVIEW

Film

Bright Spots in a Lackluster Year

Pop

Search and Salvage of a Vintage Bluesman

Jazz

Henry Threadgill's Seven-Piece Circus

Classical

The Long, Happy Afterlife of the Arpeggione

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Film

BY ELLA TAYLOR

ELLA'S DIAMONDS . . .

A bland, Gumpish, Nellish '94 it was for Hollywood, stuffed with mega-budget crowd-panderers that were long on callow charm and short on daring. All the better to see the lower-budget gems that glittered through the cracks. Here they are.

Best Picture: *Hoop Dreams.* Three white filmmakers (Steve James, Frederick Marx, and Peter Gilbert) listened to and looked hard at five years in the lives of two black high school basketball players trying for the big leagues, and came up with a rich, cliché-free slice of

Scoring in *Hoop Dreams*

inner-city life, served with tact and sympathy. The best kind of crowd-pleaser—at the end I was desperate to know what happened to the boys next.
Runners-up: Nicholas Hytner's waggish, wise, sorrowful *The Madness of King George*, scripted by Alan Bennett from his play; Quentin Tarantino's gorgeously mounted, fiendishly clever *Pulp Fiction*; Krzysztof Kieslowski's acidic *White* and beautiful *Red*; Peter Jackson's wickedly inventive *Heavenly Creatures*; Ray Müller's *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl*, a quietly astute dissection of Hitler's designated filmmaker; John N. Smith's devastating docudrama *The Boys of St. Vincent*, about child abuse in a Canadian Catholic orphanage.

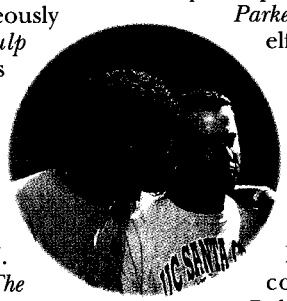
Best New Director: Boaz Yakin, for breathing new life into ghetto-movie bromides with *Fresh*, his beautifully scripted, delicately directed chamber piece about the life of a young black schoolboy and drug-peddler.
Runners-up: Darnell Martin, for her bubbling *I Like It Like That*; Kevin Smith, for *Clerks*, a gabby poem to the convenience store; Rose Troche, for her sweet and sexy lesbian romance, *Go Fish*.

Best Actress: Linda Fiorentino, for letting rip as Miss Evil Incarnate in *The Last Seduction*.
Runners-up: Crissy Rock, for her searing debut as a welfare mother in *Ladybird, Ladybird*; Jessica Lange, for pouring libido into the otherwise plodding *Blue Sky*; Lauren Vélez, for her exuberant street smarts in *I Like It Like That*; Jennifer Jason Leigh, overcooked accent and all, in *Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle.*

Fiorentino in action

Best Supporting Actress: Kelly Lynch, for her radiant versatility in *Imaginary Crimes* and *The Beans of Egypt, Maine.*
Runners-up: Brooke Smith, for her quietly simmering Sonya in *Vanya on 42nd Street*; Dianne Wiest, for "Don't speak!" in *Bullets Over Broadway*; Roma Maffia, for her witty takeoff on the feminist attorney Gloria Allred in *Disclosure*; Emma Thompson, for precision screwball timing as the spinster scientist in *Junior.*

Best Actor: Jointly to Samuel L. Jackson and John Travolta, for hilarious buddy work as the philosophizing hit-men in *Pulp Fiction.*
Runners-up: Nigel Hawthorne, for scintillating suffering and sarcasm in *The Madness of King George*; Campbell Scott, for his pent-up Robert Benchley in *Mrs. Parker*; Colm Feore, for his elfin Glenn Gould in *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*; Chazz Palminteri, for his arty thug in *Bullets Over Broadway.*



Jackson and Travolta

Best Supporting Actor: Martin Landau, for his consumptive pathos as Bela Lugosi in *Ed Wood*—the performance of a distinguished career.
Runners-up: Samuel L. Jackson, for the deadbeat dad in *Fresh*; Rowan Atkinson, for the inept novice vicar in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*; Gary Sinise, for the embittered Vietnam vet in *Forrest Gump.*

Tell us your opinion of the year's movies in this month's Arts & Entertainment Poll (see attached card). In May, Ella Taylor will report on what our readers had to say.

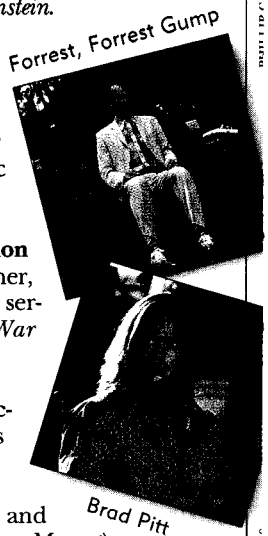
. . . AND DUDS

The Cereal Killer Award goes to *Interview with the Vampire*, for the discreet Grape-Nuts crunch heard every time Tom Cruise sank his fangs into a juicy neck. Comes packaged with **The Self-Service Award** to novelist Anne Rice, for the multipage ads she took out in major newspapers, gushing over the performance of Cruise, whose casting she had vehemently opposed.

The Jean-Jacques Rousseau Award for Noble Savage Therapy goes to Jodie Foster, for her wild child in *Nell.* All she wants to do is dance in the woods and heal the world with her unspoiled goodness. Oh, me too.

The Stitch in Time Award to Kenneth Branagh, for quality needlework on the reconstituted limbs of the humanoids in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein.*

The Soft Center Award to *Forrest Gump*, for pioneering the Hershey Bar school of analytic philosophy.



The Supreme Unction Award to Kevin Costner, for holier-than-thou sermonizing in *The War* and *Wyatt Earp.*

The Award for Pectoral Excellence is shared by Brad Pitt (*Legends of the Fall*), Liam Neeson (*Nell*), and Vincent Perez (*Queen Margot*), for distinguished service in the field of upper-torso display.

Brad Pitt

The Play It Again, Sam Award goes to Michael Douglas, for *Disclosure*, his third outing as pitiable victim of monster career women.

The Pretty in Pink Award goes to Arnold Schwarzenegger, for his fetching maternity outfit in *Junior.*

The Ken Russell Mad-Composer Award goes to Gary Oldman, for his overheated Beethoven in *Immortal Beloved.*

Ella Taylor is a film critic for Mirabella.

FINE LINE FEATURES

LINDA R. CHEN

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY JONATHAN CHARLES LUND

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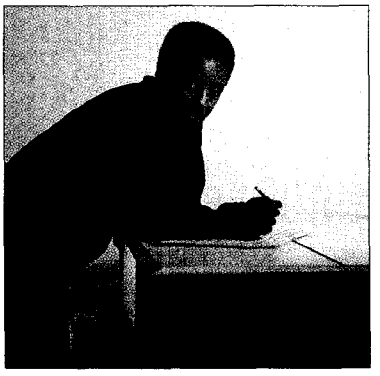
Popular Music and Jazz

BY BOB BLUMENTHAL AND CHARLES M. YOUNG

THE WIZARD OF ODD

Excellence and eccentricity go hand in hand with the composer-saxophonist Henry Threadgill. His first trio, Air, looked conventional enough until he added a wall of discarded hubcaps, which he called a "hubkaphone." Then there was the poll-winning seven-piece band, including a cello and two drummers, that Threadgill insisted upon calling Sextett. Last year's fascinating *Song Out of My Trees* (Black Saint) features what must be the first piece for four different guitars (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) plus hunting horns.



Henry Threadgill weaves his spell

Threadgill has created nothing more distinctive than his septet Very Very Circus. Formed in 1990, it features the leader's alto sax and flute with French horn, drums, two guitars, and two tubas. This makes for an exotic, rambunctious, and often danceable mix that grows more intriguing as new instrumental colors are added. *Carry the Day* (Columbia), the fourth album of Threadgill's Very Very Circus era, is the most accessible and spirited yet.

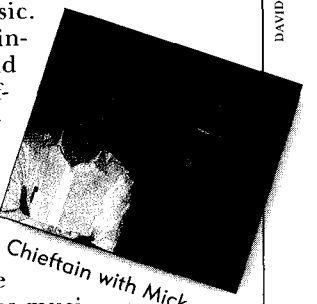
Alone, on "Between Orchids..." and "Jenkins Boys...," the band creates looping melodic sequences and tag-team improvisations that risk clutter yet somehow result in clarity. When accordion, violin, percussion, vocals, and the Chinese pipa are added to create Very Very Circus Plus, the music enters a magical, Oz-like realm, as if the Andes had moved into proximity with the Himalayas and whirling dervishes were learning to do-si-do. Threadgill's alto, one of the most pungent saxophone sounds in jazz, adds bite to the surprisingly clean instrumental weave; yet the primary story here is his writing, a blend of the homemade and the universal which suggests that he may be contemporary music's answer to Charles Ives. **—B.B.**

SECOND COMING OF A DELTA BLUES LEGEND

During the folk revival of the early sixties, musicologists were able to track down several Delta bluesmen using clues culled from their original recordings, made decades earlier. One of the foremost of these musicians was Bukka White, a slide player who ranked near Robert Johnson for virtuosity, existential terror, and raucous good times. Out of music and in obscurity when he was rediscovered, in 1963, White hit the coffeehouse circuit with a strong sense of gratitude and his talent still intact at the comparatively young age of fifty-four (he lived until 1977). This aspect of White's career is now documented on *1963 Isn't 1962* (Adelphi/Genes Blues Vault), recorded live in Berkeley on November 10 and 11, 1963. The slide guitar is especially appropriate for the expression of humor or fear, and here White was plainly more interested in laughs—complaining about women who left grease stains on his pillow in "Vaseline Head Woman," for example. In tales both tall and small (sometimes even surreal) his lyrical gift shines as clear today as when it inspired Bob Dylan to record White's "Fixin' to Die" on his first album. A big man, who played a National steel guitar because wooden instruments crumbled in his hands, White had a booming voice that shattered not glass so much as entire continents. To hear him in top form, enthused to have an audience for the first time in years, is truly invigorating. Also worth tracking down: *The Complete Bukka White* (Columbia/Legacy), a collection of his original recordings, which is more reflective of his eerie side, and *Mississippi Blues* (Takoma), his first studio album after being rediscovered. **—C.M.Y.**

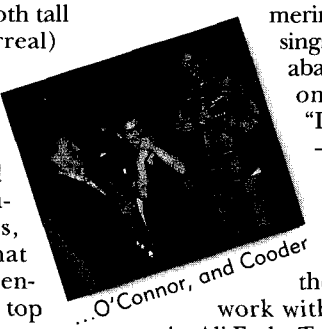
IRISH POPS

Having released thirty-one albums in thirty-two years together, and having been named Ireland's official musical ambassadors, the Chieftains hardly need to be rescued from obscurity, but they do continue to surprise audiences with their ability to reinvent themselves inside and outside the boundaries of traditional Irish music. Defined by the interplay of flute and fiddle, the Chieftains' sound remains beautiful in many contexts. On *The Long Black Veil* (RCA Victor) they borrow the talents of various musicians and vocalists more commonly associated with rock-and-roll. The title cut, an American country standard about the mysterious woman who used to put flowers on Rudolph Valentino's grave, is sung by Mick Jagger, whose faux southern accent sounds vastly less faux than the accents of all the *Playgirl*-centerfold types who now define Nashville. At his age and with his history, Jagger is entitled to sing about mortality in any accent he chooses. The two songs sung by Sinead O'Connor remind everyone that her eccentricities have overshadowed an amazing, shimmering voice. Ry Cooder sings "The Coast of Malabar" and plays guitar on the instrumental "Dunmore Lassies"—the latter so successful that he should consider an album-length collaboration along the lines of his recent work with the African guitarist Ali Farka Toure. The low point is undoubtedly Tom Jones's rendition of "Tennessee Waltz," so over-the-top that it makes Michael Bolton seem understated. One stinker out of thirteen cuts is not, however, a bad batting average at all. **—C.M.Y.**



Chieftain with Mick...

DAVID MAHER/SPORTSFILE



...O'Connor, and Cooder

CHUCK PULIN

Bob Blumenthal is a jazz critic for The Boston Globe *and* CD Review.
Charles M. Young reviews popular music for Playboy, Musician, *and other publications.*

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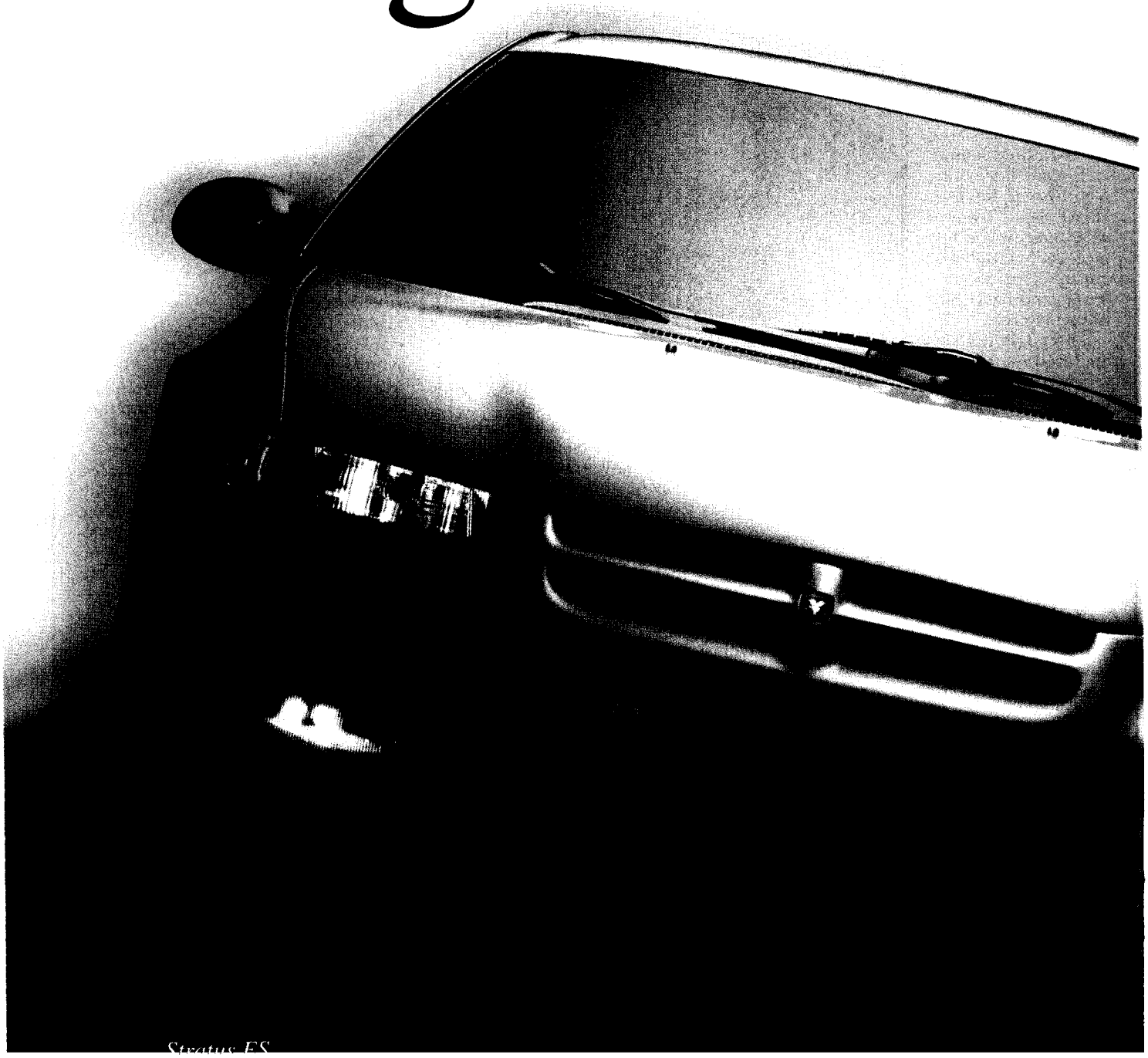

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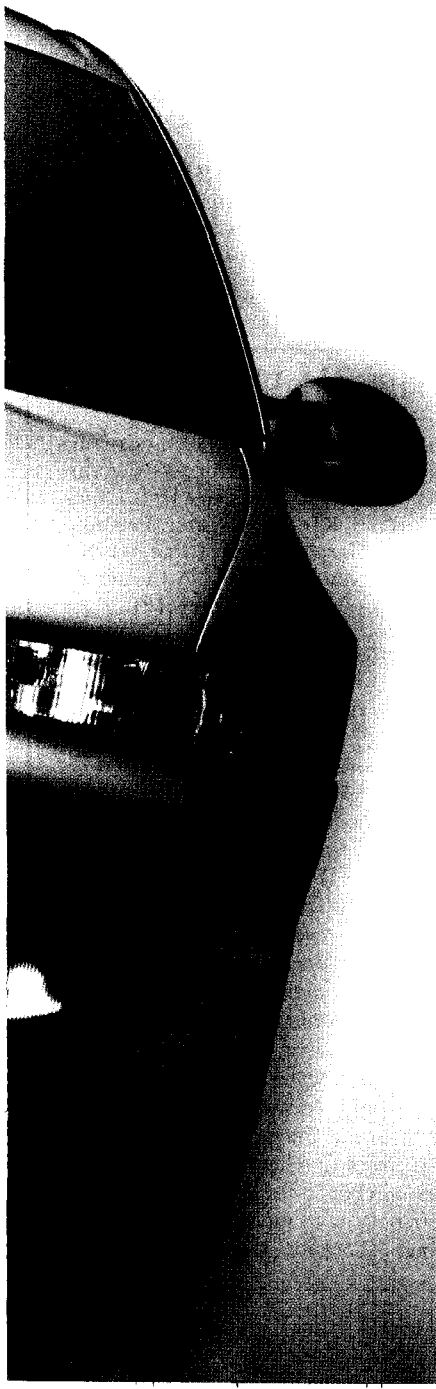

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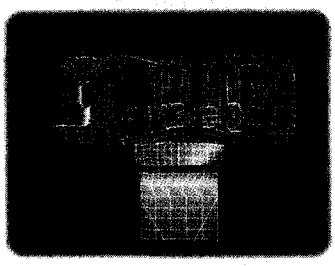

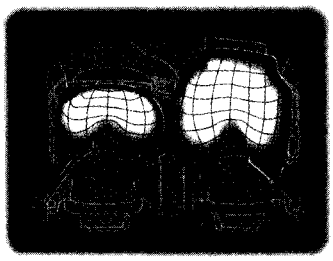

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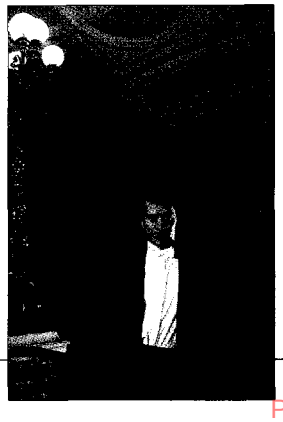
VALENTIN M. BARANOVSKY

The Kirov Opera's production of *Kitezh*

Just over a year ago the Kirov Opera staged a week-long festival centered on Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908). "RIMSKY WHO?" *The New York Times* asked in a facetious headline. Well, the *New Grove Dictionary of Opera* lists among the composer's distinctions "unique powers of natural and magical illustration" and "harmonic and instrumental inventions that are truly in a class of their own," concluding that "to those properly receptive," Rimsky-Korsakov's "can seem the most multivalently evocative and transporting music in the world." This month the Brooklyn Academy of Music has imported the centerpiece of last year's festivities in St. Petersburg: the fully staged *Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniya*, a pantheistic pageant painted in jewel tones. Cast, chorus, and orchestra—numbering in the hundreds—come to us straight from the Kirov, headed by their artistic director and conductor Valery Gergiev (February 28 and March 1, 4, and 5; call 718-636-4100). At the New York Philharmonic, Gergiev also leads Rimsky-Korsakov's Symphony No. 2, the "Antar" (March 2, 3, 4, and 7; call 212-721-6500). And at Carnegie Hall, Eve Queler and her Opera Orchestra of New York offer a concert performance of *The Tsar's Bride*, more conventional in plot and musical structure than *Kitezh*. The Kirov's voluptuous mezzo-soprano Olga Borodina is the bride's rival, driven by despair to dabble in poison (March 5; call 212-799-1982).



F. VAN TEYLINGEN/PHILIPS CLASSICS

Valery Gergiev

IMMORTAL HEARTSTRINGS

A six-stringed instrument the size of a cello, played with a bow but shaped and fretted like a guitar: this is the arpeggione (pronounced ahr-pay-*jone*-ay), or *guitare d'amour*, one of the shortest-lived species in the evolution of the violin family. Invented in 1823, this lovelorn bull fiddle probably deserved its fate: from a practical point of view, it surely proved a gauche piece of work. Yet before the arpeggione disappeared, a piece of music was written that would keep its name alive forever—Schubert's lovely Sonata in A minor, D. 821 (1824), for piano and arpeggione. Popularly known as the "Arpeggione," this single extant composition for the extinct instrument has found a happy niche in the cello repertoire, and not only there. Violists with the temperament for solo careers like the sonata too. In fact, both Yuri Bashmet (March 14) and Tabea Zimmermann (April 7) have scheduled the "Arpeggione" for their Carnegie Hall recital debuts (call 212-247-7800). It also figures on upcoming programs of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, again with a violist: Paul Neubauer (April 21, 23; call 212-875-5788). Is the soft-spoken viola a better stand-in for its defunct cousin than the majestic cello? Bashmet, the foremost violist of our day and perhaps any day, has recorded a chaste, poetic account of the sonata, in a mixed recital for BMG (60112-2-RC), which fits the music's nostalgic melodies and wayward changes of mood with such intimacy as to suggest that it is.

RCA VICTOR RED SEAL

Yuri Bashmet

SIGHT AND SOUND IN THE BALANCE

The late choreographer George Balanchine, who knew music better than many musicians, used to boast about the orchestra that played for his New York City Ballet. But truth to tell, what emanated from the pit was mostly pretty grim. Certain admirers began to doubt that musicianship and dancing, even at the very highest level, are compatible; as Sancho Panza tells us, if two ride on horseback, one must go behind. Still, there are special cases, as when NYCB's dancers Darci Kistler (Balanchine's last muse) and Nikolaj Hübbe join the recitalists Young Uck Kim, on violin, and Staffan Scheja, on piano, for the Stravinsky-Balanchine *Duo Concertant*. In the first movement the dancers stand by the piano, listening. In the next three movements they break free in dance, seeming almost to improvise. In the fifth and final movement the stage is dark, each dancer isolated in the pool of a single spotlight. The ballet prompts us first to listen with the dancers and then to watch with the musicians; but in the end we are left to listen and watch on our own. In the sort of performance of which these four first-class artists are capable, viewers could witness the rare perfect synthesis (Orchestra Hall, Chicago, March 5; Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C., March 8; Herbst Theater, San Francisco, March 10; UCLA Center for the Arts, Los Angeles, March 12).

Austin Baer is a writer based in New York.

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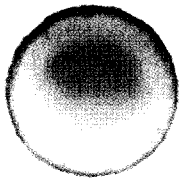

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(Continued from page 30)

Long pause. A sigh. "Hmmm. That is something he might throw back at me someday."

WHY do men donate sperm? Since the practice of banking sperm began growing, after the Second World War, donors—most of them young, many of them medical students—have offered their seed to earn the modest cash stipend, or to be reassured of their fertility, or for the satisfaction, without the attendant responsibilities, of passing along their genes. But, according to Raboy, nearly 75 percent of donors now say they're doing it primarily for the money, and the bank is seeing more older, unemployed donors along with the cash-strapped college students it has always attracted. Once they're accepted, donors can earn up to $40 for each semen sample. A reliable donor like Frank can take home $4,000 or more in a year.

This is not such easy money as one might think. Donors don't sign a contract until their sixth visit to the sperm bank, after they've been oriented, interrogated, subjected to rectal, throat, and urethral swabs, and otherwise palpated and probed. Men hoping to donate sperm complete a twelve-page questionnaire in which they must reveal details about their diet, their penchant for steam rooms, and their exposure to everything from radiation to flea powder. And they must say whether any of their relatives, including cousins, ever suffered from any of a pages-long list of diseases common and obscure. An additional HIV questionnaire presses them for details of their sexual behavior. Potential recipients fill out a less-detailed medical-history survey and also complete an HIV questionnaire. But the clinic makes no judgments about women's financial or psychological preparation for motherhood. "We're not therapists and counselors, so we don't want to pretend that we know something we don't," Raboy says. No state health regulations exist to determine if women are suitable to receive donor sperm—"which is how we like it," she says. As long as a woman is healthy, Raboy asks, why shouldn't she "be able to have this technology available in a way that is accessible, affordable, and user-friendly?"

Over the years a handful of donors have refused payment, including Joe, a married software technician with kids of his own who was another sperm-bank regular. Like Frank, Joe has reached the bank's ten-offspring limit (five in state, five out of state); his sperm is now available only to satisfied customers who want true biological siblings for their DI kids. Raboy says that good, committed donors are hard to find, and paying them helps ensure that they'll return for follow-up testing (frozen semen is quarantined for six months, after which time the donor's blood is retested for HIV) and live up to their one-year contracts. "We've been burned," Raboy says. A few would-be donors dropped in for a "free physical" and then disappeared. Several failed to return for follow-up testing (their sperm was disposed of). At least one was less than forthcoming about his cocaine use. But Raboy adds that the six initial visits tend to break the resolve of men who lie or withhold crucial information. "You can tell who's lying. You just get feelings about certain people," she says.

Though they are candid about needing the money, donors also express altruistic or feminist motives. "I want to help provide maximum choice in life decisions," one wrote on his questionnaire. "I need the compensation, but I also like to help others," another wrote. One man said he was moved to donate because his sister is a lesbian who needs a sperm donor herself.

Most of these men come to the sperm bank after seeing its pleas for healthy donors in Bay Area newspapers or hearing public-service announcements. Frank decided to become a donor after hearing a radio interview with Barbara Raboy. He was captivated. "It seems as if everyone always makes fun of donating—the jokes about masturbating in a closet. But when I heard Barbara, I thought, This is something I could support. It's sort of an accident of nature that some women can't have children if they don't have a man." Frank says that his family jokes about his donating, evidently "to hide their discomfort." At the time Frank was donating regularly, his girlfriend, an infertile woman ten years his senior who longs for a child of her own, objected fiercely. They argued about it before his appointments—his girlfriend saw Frank's fairly effortless reproducing for hire as a cruel joke. "She calls it sperm-o-rama," Frank told me.

That bitter wisecrack is understandable when one considers that the Oakland sperm bank is, in a sense, akin to a supermarket stocked with Grade A semen. Taken out of context, the following words, from a happy client quoted in the bank's 1991 annual report, might refer to just about anything but the banking of human sperm: "It is all too rare that one receives the kind of customer service you and your staff provide." The language of commodities is general to the industry—one Los Angeles sperm bank displays the message BANK YOUR FUTURE WITH CALIFORNIA CRYOBANK on T-shirts. But the Oakland sperm bank was the first to deal directly with consumers, instead of doctors. And the integrity of the product and its purveyor are crucial to these women, most of whom require three to twelve attempts, at a cost of $800 to $3,000 or more, to conceive (20 percent don't conceive at all).

WHY are some heterosexual single women willing to go to such trouble and expense for something many men are still happy to give away? Often unattached women craving motherhood decide, as Linda did, not to enlist the help of a male friend, because they dread the complications of lifelong involvement with that friend. But perhaps more significant in the era of AIDS, these women want "safe" sperm. As one of Raboy's clients puts it, "The sperm bank screens its donors better than I screen my boyfriends."

We cannot escape the broader issue of the demotion of father to donor, and what that might foretell

The screening of sperm is one of the ways sperm-bank technology frees women "to separate sexuality from reproduction," according to Raboy. But no matter how tidy the technology that achieves that separation, the resulting human being will always be the product of an equal biological union of male and female. To create a situation in which a child grows up without a shred of evidence of that male—to in-

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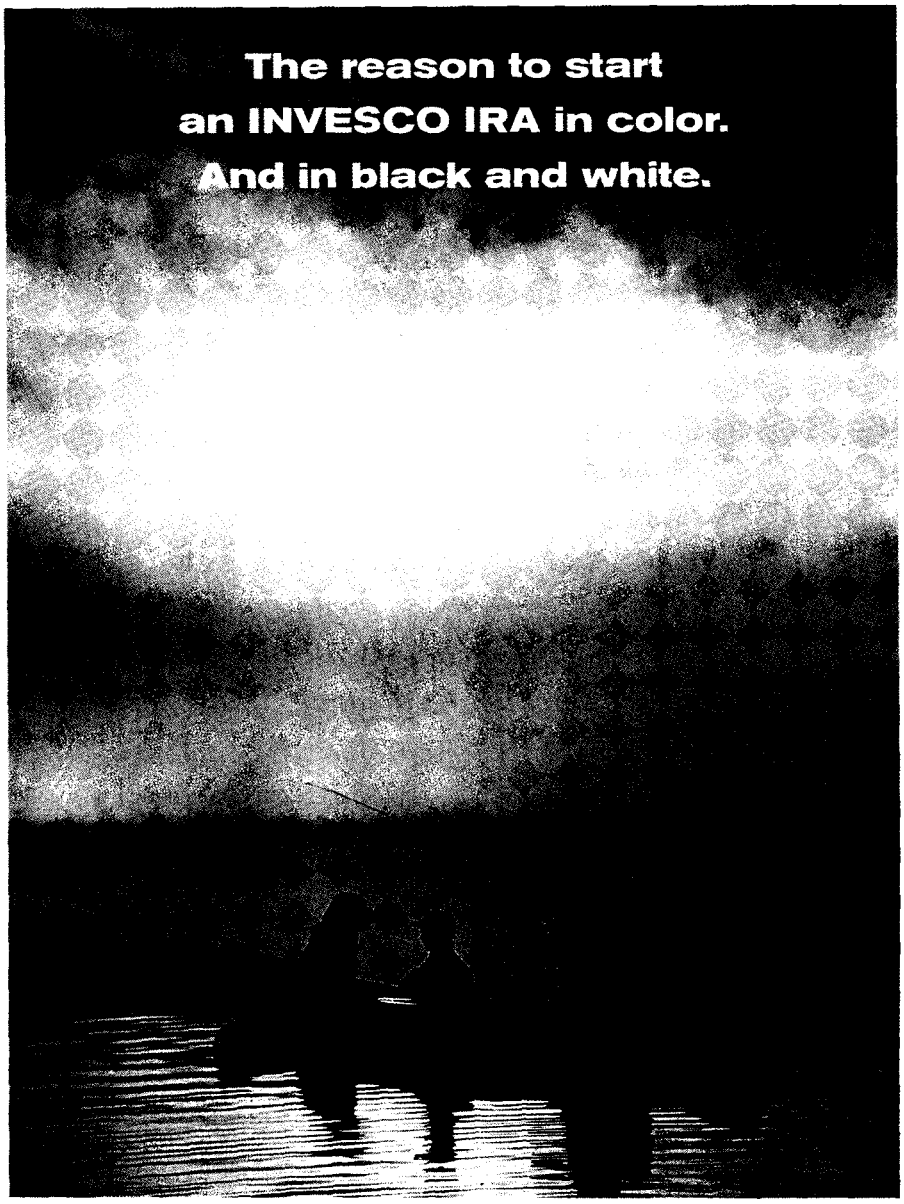
struct one's seven-year-old, as a woman I interviewed has, to say *donor*, "never *father*"—steers us, ethically speaking, into uncharted and possibly rough waters.

They are waters few are comfortable navigating. In interviews and in casual discussions on the subject, I heard many an opinion prefaced by a disclaimer like "Now, I don't want to sound like Dan Quayle, but . . ." Such squeamishness appears to stem from the reluctance of the liberal-minded to tread on the rights of women to "control their bodies." Doesn't the decision to have a child by donor-insemination, after all, fall in easily with pro-choice ideology?

As this path to parenthood grows increasingly popular, however, we cannot escape the broader issue of the demotion of father to donor, and what that might foretell. "Have we done something wrong when we frustrate, by our efforts, something [children] have a right to expect?" asks James Lindemann Nelson, an associate for ethical studies at the Hastings Center, an ethics think tank in Briarcliff Manor, New York. Of the many reasons we have children, Nelson observes, one is a "longing for connectedness," to the past as well as the future. That is, we are eager to establish a bond, by bringing a new child into the world, that approximates our link with our own parents. When a woman inseminates herself with anonymous sperm, she creates such a bond for herself, but she deprives her child of a relationship with a father. To be sure, a child may grow up without one parent for a variety of reasons: death, divorce, abandonment. Families are torn; psychological wounds are inflicted. Out of necessity, people persevere. It's the artifice, the setting out for our own purposes to create children who won't enjoy contact with their genetic relations, that troubles Nelson and that is likely, in spite of everyone's sincere and loving intentions, to weigh on these DI children as well.

For now, the vague, potential harm of this practice is obscured by the happy fact of much-adored children and the hopefulness and determination of their mothers. As they cradle their new sons and daughters, women like Linda don't feel they can be faulted. At least they're telling themselves that they won't go looking for problems. Or, as Linda says, "There are a lot of things I don't have to worry about for a while." ❦



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The Echoes of Northumbria

From Hadrian's Wall to Durham Cathedral

by Peter Davison

As I grow older, and my brain spends more of its time parked in front of a computer screen, I yearn for a holiday that freshens mind and body and doesn't force me to stare through the rigid glass of a car's windshield all day, so as to Cover a Lot of Ground. The point of travel, for me, is to get to the bottom of a new reality, ideally one as remote as the Wonderland that Alice found at the bottom of a rabbit hole.

So my wife and I have worked out a strategy: We pick a distant location and then choose a single base of operations at which to stay for a couple of weeks. We turn our backs on ambitious auto travel. We try to concentrate on one small, choice region and explore it mostly on foot. We unpack only twice: when we arrive at our destination and when we return home.

If you're going to follow this program, you've got to be prepared from the beginning to ignore the disapproval of your knowledgeable friends ("What! You didn't visit Lindisfarne / Lourdes / Lerici when you were so close?"). Your motto must be "Less is more"—and this will justify your ransacking a coherently limited territory, for the sake of rewards far more memorable than checking off names on a list of scattered destinations.

The general rules my wife and I follow are: 1) Seek out in advance a place where walking is tolerated, or even encouraged. Great Britain, France, Germany, and Scandinavia rank high on our list. 2) Make sure that good small-scale maps of the region are available, either in this country or at your destination. 3) Look for a place whose food and drink will be an object of pleasure or, at the very least, of curiosity. We follow this rule whether we plan to

Hadrian's Wall has weathered eighteen centuries

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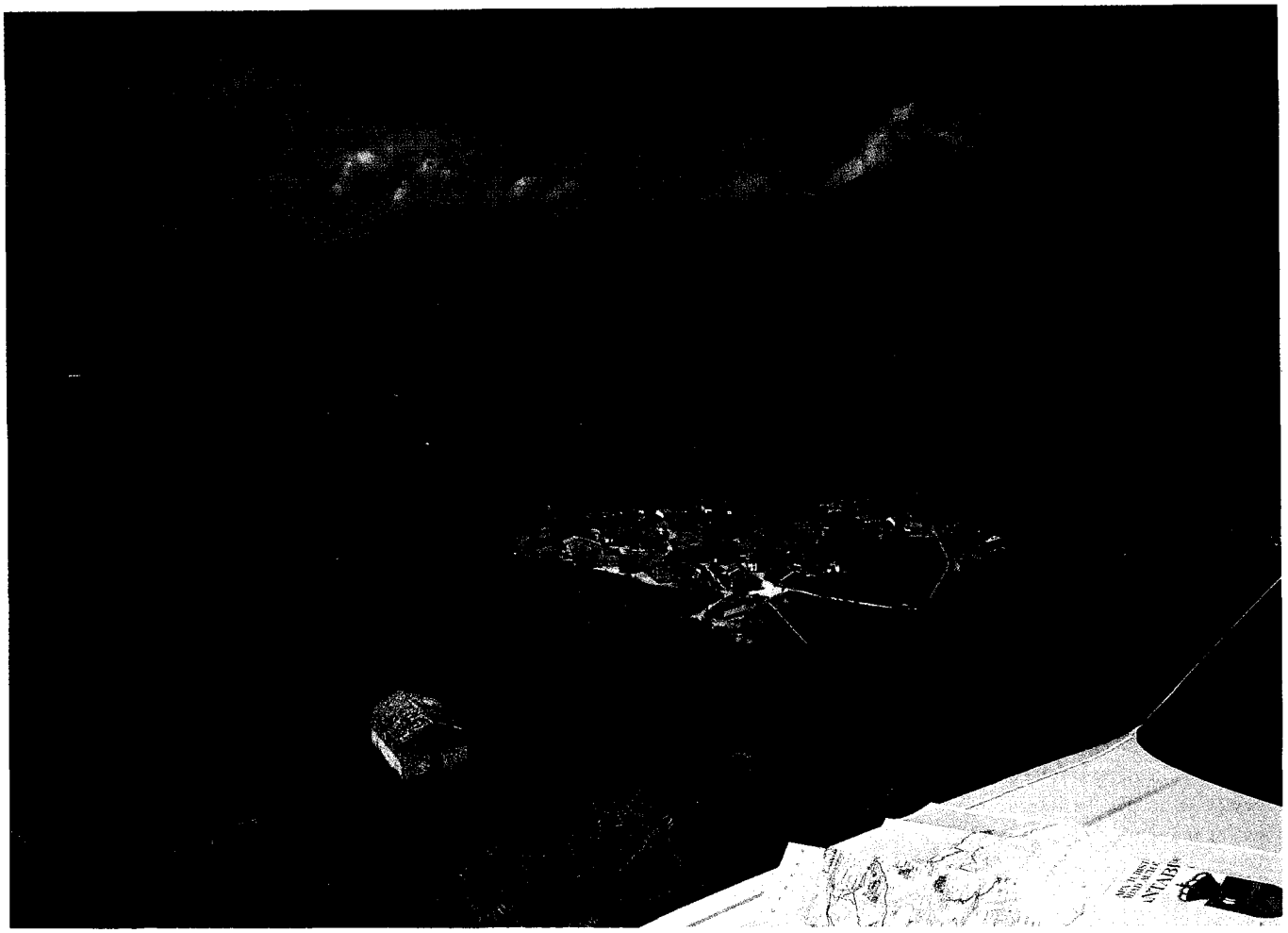

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MICHAEL BUSSELLE; BELOW: MIRROR SYNDICATION INTERNATIONAL

Above, rural Northumbria; below, Blanchland

eat all our meals at restaurants and picnics or to cook some of them ourselves. 4) Consider renting a furnished house or apartment, especially if you want to stay more than a week. Renting is often desirable, though not essential. 5) Once you've chosen your destination, plan your journey so as to get the long-distance travel out of the way in one or two big jumps. We find that this usually involves an airplane flight followed by a train or bus trip to take us to the station nearest Go. There we rent a car for the last miles, so as to have it handy during our stay, for short hops to our walks and for detours. Rarely do we chalk up more than 150 or 200 auto miles in a couple of weeks. At the end of the stay we return the car to the station and hop public transportation back to the international airport.

Toward the solstice last summer, to exploit the longest daylight of the year, we set forth for the lonely reaches of Northumbria. This is in the northeast of England, and includes the Roman wall that in the second century A.D. Hadrian constructed between the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea to keep out the unspeakable Picts. It also happens to be the region where, 1,800 years later, my father spent his youth, but I was more interested in the present landscape than in genealogical research. This borderland between old England and old Scotland is today, we happily discovered, the most sparsely inhabited region of England.

We took an overnight flight to Heathrow Airport and a bus to King's Cross station, and, after an agreeably scenic and extremely comfortable three-hour train journey from London, disembarked at Newcastle upon Tyne. Having reserved a rental car, we nervously but without incident negotiated twenty-four miles on what seemed to us to be the wrong side of the road along the border between the counties of Northumberland and Durham. In forty-five minutes we had arrived at the tiny, trim village of Blanchland, our designated command post, where a friend had recommended the Lord Crewe Arms Hotel. As a history of the village succinctly states, "Blanchland is in fact an eighteenth century model village, built on the plan and out of the remains of a mediaeval abbey." The Lord Crewe Arms Hotel incorporates most of the abbey and some of the old village.

THE pleasures of settling for a week or two in an inn like the Lord Crewe Arms are not to be underrated. That inn's rooms vary in size and splendor, but ours was spacious, and generously and attentively provided with light, heat, a view, and spanking cleanliness; our (private) bathroom was positively luxurious. The hotel contains both a pub—downstairs in an eerie, cryptlike space that was once the abbot's private chapel—and a restaurant, upstairs, with a breathtaking view of the moors. Many locals come to the pub for a daytime or an evening pint of ale, and well-cooked meals that are eaten in the cool crypt, in front of the deep orange flames of a coal grate in an adjoining parlor, or, on sunny days, in the garden. The restaurant, in a graciously proportioned eighteenth-century dining room, serves ample English breakfasts (ranging from excellent muesli to the best kippered herring I have ever tasted, to say nothing of bacon, eggs, sausage, tomatoes, fried bread, and all that) and robust dinners, both of which may be added to the room rate for a reasonable total of $80.00 a day per person (a sum that includes taxes but not extras like alcoholic beverages and personal laundry). This arrangement assures you that you will be not just predictably but sumptuously fed, and so you can give your days over to your favorite forms of exploration or rest.

Having unpacked, and with our maps at the ready, we turned our attention to the details of the terrain. We planned our explorations to reach out from Blanchland like spokes from the hub of a wheel. Every day we set out by car or on foot for a destination from which we would walk five or ten miles—by streams, through forests, along the Roman wall, over pastures or bleak, curlew-haunted moors, arranging our expeditions so that we would fetch up, after a walk of three or four hours, at a pub like the Smelter's Arms, in Castleside; or the Twice Brewed Inn, at Once Brewed, at the wall; or the Antiques Bar of the Allenheads Inn, at Allenheads; or the Half Moon Inn, at Durham; or the Lord Crewe Arms itself.

The food at pubs ranges from sandwiches to ham and salad to steak-and-kidney pie (with chips, of course—chips with everything) to such oddities as baked potatoes stuffed with chili. The ales available are immensely varied and wondrously satisfying. There were such internationally famous brews as Worthington's and Burton's Best Bitter, and less familiar ones such as Vaux Samson Real Ale and a particularly fetching variety known as Speckled Hen. After five thirsty miles the ale is more welcome than the provender, especially when you can be confident that awaiting you at the end of the day will be a repast including the likes of smoked salmon, turbot, wild boar, salad, and a cheese or black-currant delice.

We had prudently prepared for all sorts of weather, but found ourselves in the grip of a particularly cold and rainy late spring, which did not bother us except for the day on the northwest spoke when we were virtually blown off Hadrian's Wall. The

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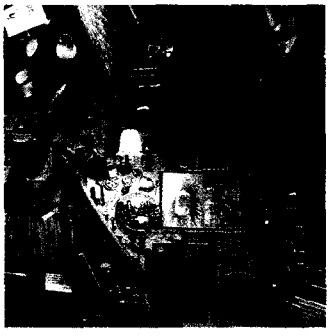
walking gave us wonderful nourishment for eye and ear alike. In this part of England sheep outnumber the human population, and rabbits outnumber the sheep, especially on the high fells. You sometimes encounter other walkers, or even cyclists, on such clear footpaths as the southerly moorland trail along Waskerley Way. Following the bed of a disused railway line, Waskerley Way offers views across the domed, lofty fells that seem to stretch out forever; in the spring the bright-green landscape is dotted with thousands of variegated wild flowers.



We encountered a shepherd at Red House who looked for all the world like John Brown, with a great shaggy beard, a herd of about 600 Swaledale and Scottish Blackface sheep, a quartet of excellent border collies, and a bright-red trail bike. "It's bleak here," he remarked cheerfully. "Bleak." Then he delivered a solemn warning about magpies, which were plentiful. "Dreadful bad luck," he exclaimed in a broad Northumbrian accent. "Only yesterday I saw one at breakfast time, and before the day was done, I had two dead sheep. I'll tell you summat: if you see a magpie, whip off your hat and spit in it as soon as you can. They're *dreadful* bad luck."

Armed with this invaluable advice, we set off down the pathway, with gorse blooming in rich yellow among its dark-green thornbushes and broom beginning to reveal its paler yellow at the tips of its branches. We passed ungrazed fields dotted with mignonettes, bluebells, buttercups, dandelions, and asters. Along the horizon the occasional cultivated field blazed out, a pale-yellow patch of distant flax-bloom. In the pastures ewes and lambs baaed to one another and lambs butted their mothers' udders for milk. Now and then we would see a solitary horsewoman out riding with her dog. As many as a hundred crows gathered in a single field, and scores of rabbits scampered for cover into their warrens. We could hear the bristly spiraling ecstasy of skylarks, the startled mew of a lapwing, flashing black and white as she circled protectively over the half-dozen grounded puffballs that were her young chicks, and the ghostly chortle of curlews, always seeming to come from an enormous distance. Nearby wrens and chaffinches gargled for joy—or purposes of territorial competition—and we could hear, from under the hedges, the guttural cluck of pheasants.

Other walks took us northwesterly through the cold wind along the Pennine Way and the astonishingly well preserved Roman wall, northerly by the side of such energetic streams as the Devil's Water, which Constable might have painted, or to the southeast through deep woods only a mile or two from the great Norman cathedral at Durham, fresh from celebrating its 900th anniversary in 1993. To the southwest, above the old mining settlement of Allenheads, which claims to be England's highest village, the whir of the wings of two red grouse startled us as we walked through the rain past a field full of uprooted stumps and the abandoned mine shafts of nineteenth-century lead mines—a corrective for pastoral nostalgia. We escaped into the warmth of the most eccentric and entertaining pub of our rambles, the Antiques Bar of the eighteenth-century Allenheads Inn. Here the ceiling is festooned with horse collars and other harness, old shoes, trombones, tiger heads, stuffed weasels, maritime running lights, photos of Rolls-Royces and weddings, pool cues, strings, nets, balls, antlers, and relics of the old mining days that W. H. Auden evoked in one of his earliest poems, "Allendale": "The smelting-mill stack is crumbling, no smoke is alive there, / Down in the valley the furnace no lead-ore of worth burns. . . ."

We settled in the dry, warm, curiosity-crammed bar with a bottle of Newcastle Brown Ale (rather strong) and a large helping of cottage pie, and chatted with other refugees from the weather and with the bartender and owner, Peter Stenson. His inn has an unusual dining room full of brazen objects (kettles, plates, plaques, dogs, and owls), another (where muddy shoes are not allowed) full of large photographs of members of the royal House of Windsor, and eight bedrooms of various sizes and degrees of luxury. The whole place has a cozy, cheerful air, and travelers might fare here for less than half the price they'd pay at the Lord Crewe Arms, though a bit more simply.

THIS system of travel—a dozen daily destinations radiating from a hub—requires you to keep a firm grip on the 1:50,000-scale Landranger maps, so as not to stray off course. The maps define each public footpath through farms and over stiles, footbridges, and fords. They matter-of-factly announce the clumpy, snarling northern-England place-names —Dirt Pot, Carts Bog, Haltwhistle, Muggleswick Common, Bearpark, Cowbyer's Fell, Pennypie Farm, Click'em Inn, Crag Lough, Cauldron Snout—and their contour lines suggest which places merit admiration. Such guidebooks as *Pub Walks in Northumbria*, by Stephen Rickerby, and *Northumbria Walks,* in the Pathfinder guide series, are worth consulting, as is, juiciest of the group, *Northumberland Circular Walks Compiled by Members of the Ramblers Association*, which furnishes not only information but also enter-

LEE SNIDER/PHOTO IMAGES; TOP: MICHAEL BUSSELLE

Above left, the Antiques Bar; above, population density

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EXPLORER
special advertising section

Season Preview

EXCURSIONS FOR ENJOYING THE NATURAL WORLD

Getaways to Spring Mountain Snow

Nordic Fest
March 11–12
Copper Mountain, Colorado

High in the Colorado Rockies, Copper Mountain Resort hosts its annual Nordic Fest, a weekend dedicated to "Fun on Skinny Skis," including Nordic skiing events, cross-country clinics, and a variety of races and demonstrations. The 10K Copper Derby, a "mostly downhill" cross-country race, is followed by more-traditional Nordic "freestyle" events. In addition, Nordic Fest will include the Snowman Triathlon, featuring the first annual "Snowman Stomp," a 5K snowshoe race. For information call 800-458-8386.

Pole, Pedal, Paddle Race
April 1
Jackson Hole, Wyoming

With the Grand Tetons as a backdrop, the annual Pole, Pedal, Paddle race is a spectacular sporting event. Racers pole a combination of alpine and Nordic courses, pedal 19.5 miles on bikes, and finish with a 9-mile paddle down the Snake River. For information call 307-733-6433.

Mountain driving requires a vehicle that can handle the toughest conditions. The 1995 Ford Explorer's new advanced features—such as Control Trac 4-Wheel Drive—will enable you and your family to enjoy the mountains in safety and comfort.

Spring Into Spring
March 25–April 9
Taos Ski Valley, New Mexico

Taos celebrates the spring snow with the style and flavor of the Southwest, combining prime skiing conditions in the mountains of New Mexico with festivities and discounted prices on lifts and lodging. Beginning on the weekend of March 25–26, with a torchlight parade, fireworks, après-ski parties, and entertainment, this year's Spring Into Spring celebration will include the return, on April 4, of the Bump, Bolt & Bike race, a ski, run, and bike triathlon. Then, on April 7–8, the second annual Ski & Golf Tourney will combine downhill ski races and a golf tournament at the Taos Country Club. For information and reservations call 800-776-1111.

Eastern Telemark Festival
March 18–19
Sugarbush, Vermont

The Mad River Valley, in the Green Mountains of Vermont, offering some of the most challenging ski terrain on the continent, is again the location for the North American Telemark Organization's annual Eastern Telemark Festival. The oldest and largest gathering of telemarkers in North America, this festival brings together more than 1,000 of those most dedicated to the sport of free-heel skiing. In addition to clinics, demonstrations, and competitions, the festival witnesses an attempt each year to set a record for the largest group telemark turn (the current record is 187 skiers at once). Following the race on March 18 is the Catamount Telemark Dance Party. For information call 802-496-4387.

Snowfest Winter Carnival
March 3–12
Lake Tahoe, California

Set in the heart of the region that boasts America's largest concentration of skiing, with eleven downhill and six cross-country resorts in the area, the North Lake Tahoe/Truckee Snowfest is the largest winter carnival in the West. A blizzard of more than 120 events covers the ten-day schedule, including both downhill and cross-country races, the Tahoe Localman triathlon, live entertainment, arts-and-crafts shows, a wild-game and fish cook-off, and a series of children's activities. The opening ceremony—at Squaw Valley USA, site of the 1960 Winter Olympics—will feature a torchlight ski parade, a light show, and fireworks, in honor of this year's theme, "Fire and Ice." For more information call 916-583-7625.

OCEAN PLANET

Ford is proud to sponsor *Ocean Planet*, a significant new environmental exhibition designed to advance the understanding and conservation of the earth's oceans. Opening on April 22, 1995, at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, this cutting-edge multimedia program will visit eleven cities during a five-year national tour. For more information call 202-357-4797.

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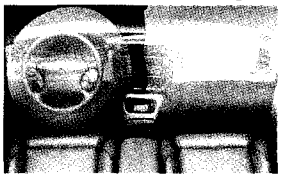

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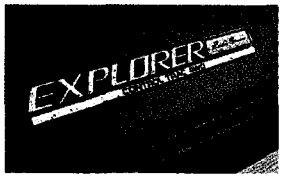

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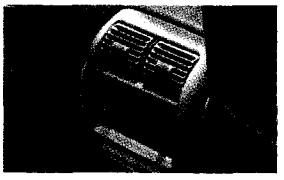
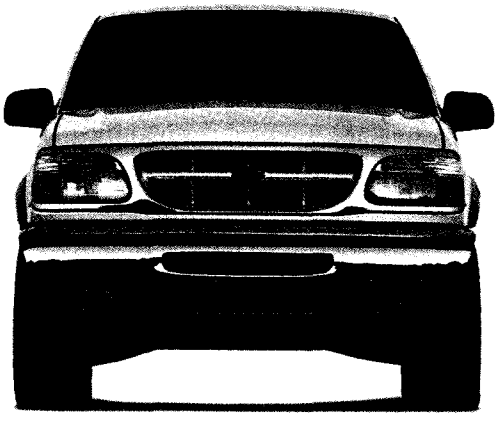


Unique new floor console has rear controls for radio, heating and air conditioning.



OCEAN PLANET
SMITHSONIAN

Ford

*Always wear your safety belt.

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tainment: "The path now rises to a children's playground and circles it to the left above the burn. Pass the heavily railed 'under twelves' playground and the pigeon lofts. Just before reaching the housing estate turn left. . ." With so solicitous and explicit a guide, who could possibly get lost on the way to Hole House, near Hexham?

Our mornings were spent in the company of bird, beast, landscape, and each other, having cordial disputes over map and guidebook. Around noontime we had a pub lunch, followed by a walk back to the car and a short drive home. Afternoons amounted to a nap followed by a malt-whiskey alert. Evenings concentrated on dinner, served by charming young waiters and waitresses from the village. The meal might consist of, say, seafood ravioli, pea soup, roast guinea fowl, mixed cooked vegetables, and sticky toffee pudding, along with half a bottle of decent claret. Meanwhile, we watched a local grande dame, at a neighboring table, make her imperious way through the pages of *The Times*, or eavesdropped on the chirping conversation of three young children with their parents. Later we often found ourselves talking over coffee with fellow travelers from other worlds—a financial journalist from Johannesburg, the owner of a fleet of taxis in Edinburgh, a hotelkeeper who had given up the raffish world of London casinos to pull beer at a pub in plainspoken Northumberland, a local woman whose husband was away at sea on a merchant ship. There is some advantage in being able to speak one of the dialects of English.

As we walked by day through field and over fell, and returned each night to the sweetly smoky chimneys of Blanchland, we found ourselves identifying not only with the beauty of the northern landscape but also with its history, and we began to hear the echoes, in the visionary distance beyond W. H. Auden, of the words of William Blake:

> And did those feet in ancient time,
> Walk upon Englands mountains green:
> And was the holy Lamb of God,
> On Englands pleasant pastures seen!
>
> And did the Countenance Divine,
> Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
> And was Jerusalem builded here,
> Among these dark Satanic Mills?

From York to Jorvik

The Viking past lives on in England

by

Phoebe-Lou Adams

THE Englishman at the neighboring tea table took a hospitable interest in my plans and disapproved of them. "York? Oh, don't do that. It's cold up there and there's nothing to see. Come down to Hardy country—it's much more beautiful."

A large young man with an indignant expression loomed over us like a genie from a bottle. "I protest that," he said. "York is a beautiful city and there are wonderful things to see there." For a moment it looked like civil war, but courtesy and handshaking prevailed. I went to York.

Going to York is easy, because it is the northeastern hub of the British rail system. I left London in a neat, comfortable, clean-windowed coach guaranteed to humiliate any American and about two hours later arrived at what was at the time it was built the largest railroad station in the world. It is a bit less impressive today and, like other British stations, porterless. Porters have been replaced by roll-your-own carts, of which there are never quite enough to go around.

York and its environs contain accommodations for every taste and budget, from bed-and-breakfast places overlooking the river to fine, discreetly modernized old houses promising period decor and four-poster beds. There seems to be a firm belief among English hotelkeepers that all travelers yearn for four-posters, although the exact merit of these objects, aside from their ability to double as hat racks, is not explained. Lodgings, with or without four-posters, should be arranged in advance, as York attracts visitors in droves.

The city is indeed a beautiful place with endless things to see, from the superbly glassed Minster to an elegant crescent seemingly lifted straight out of Bath to a contemporary lump reportedly judged, by an international gathering of architects, the ugliest building in Europe. There is a park where people roll balls about the grass in the shadow of medieval ruins and peacocks screech behind the Yorkshire Museum. Sightseeing boats can be found at the King's Staith (the word means "landing place"), and upriver lies a tree-shaded esplanade below which a variety of craft are tied up and fishermen, asked about their catch, reply, predictably, "Nothing."

York does, however, have its dangers. The first is sore feet. Old York, which contains all those things to see, lies in a rough oval straddling the rivers Ouse and Foss, and is largely surrounded by medieval walls in impressively sound repair. From a reasonably central point almost everything looks on the map to be within easy and direct walking distance. This is a delusion, because of the "snickleways." A side glance down one of these alleys is likely to reveal a bit of garden, or a flash of the river with an eight-oar crew shooting by at high speed, or an intriguing angle of stonework that turns out to be part of a small and ancient church alleged to harbor a ghost. The easy walk expands into a four-hour hike and may never reach the original objective.

Above, York's encircling walls; below shops near the Minster

The second danger is gluttony. York is

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What's on your PowerBook?

Gene Shalit
Movie Critic

Transcripts of 30 years of my movie reviews

Material for three books I'm currently writing

Form letter declining invitations to speak

Microsoft Word

MacEnvelope

Details of consequences (medical, legal) of being hit by a car

List of movie producers who may have been driving that car

Letters to write, calls to make this month (87 items)

Form letter explaining how to tie a bow tie

Form letter explaining why I wear a bow tie

Form letter explaining why I do not fly

Catalogue of 371 CDs

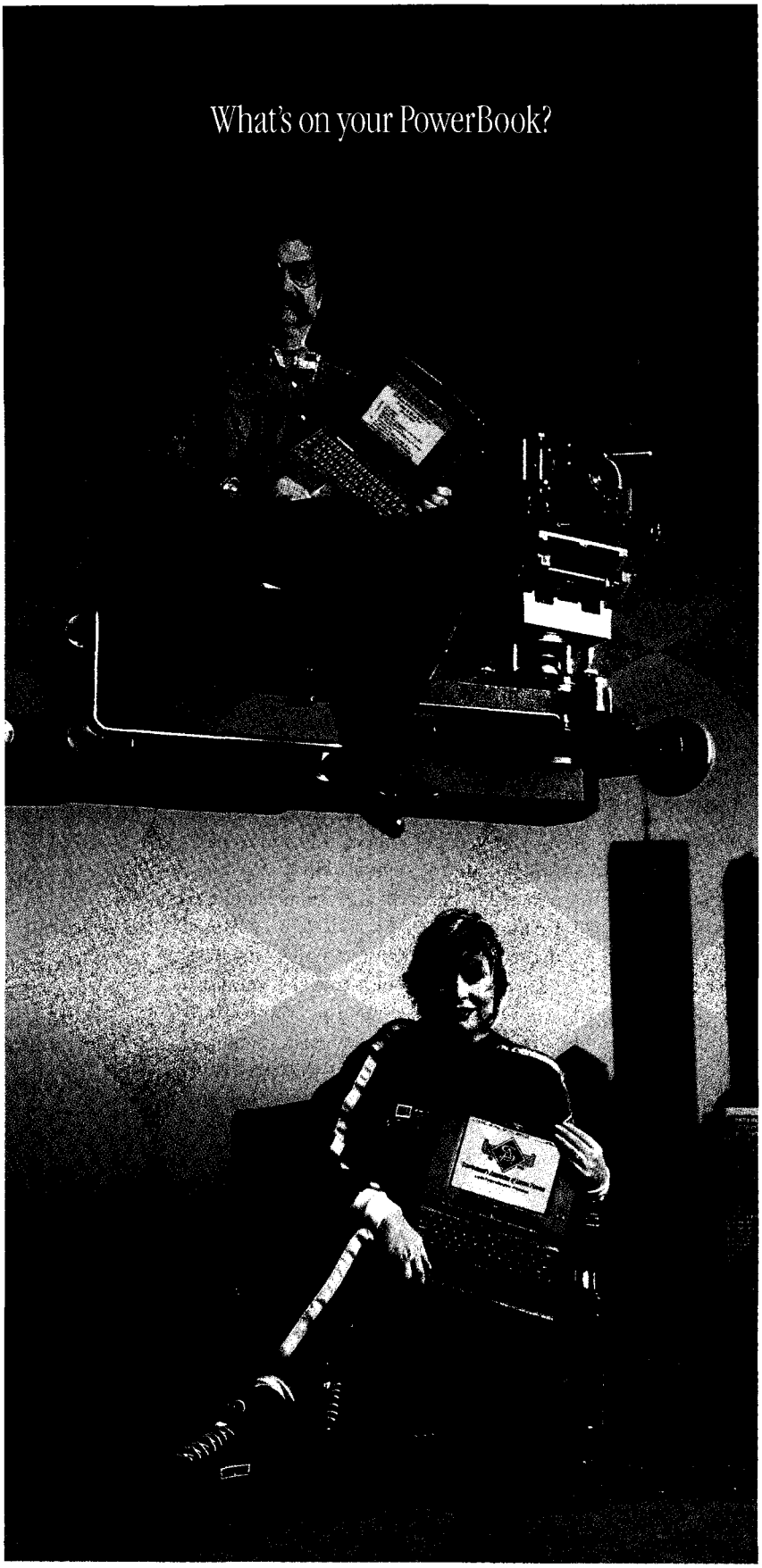
Catalogue of 5477 books

Notes for an essay on procrastination

Letters to people disagreeing with my reviews

Letters to people praising my reviews

My will



Linda Fetters-Howard
Stuntwoman

Meeting schedule for the Stuntwomen's Association of Motion Pictures

Ideas for the new SWAMP brochure

PGA Tour Golf game

Stunt coordinators' phone numbers

Burn specialists' phone numbers

Birthday list

Anniversary list

Medical emergency file for SWAMP members

Microsoft Word

Now Up-to-Date

Now Contact

A fax modem

My personalized fax cover sheet

My résumé and bio

My husband Ken's résumé and bio

Women in Film contacts

Directors' phone numbers

My florist's phone number

A dictionary

An alarm clock

My Christmas card list

Phone number of Dr. Richard Fleming, reconstructive surgeon

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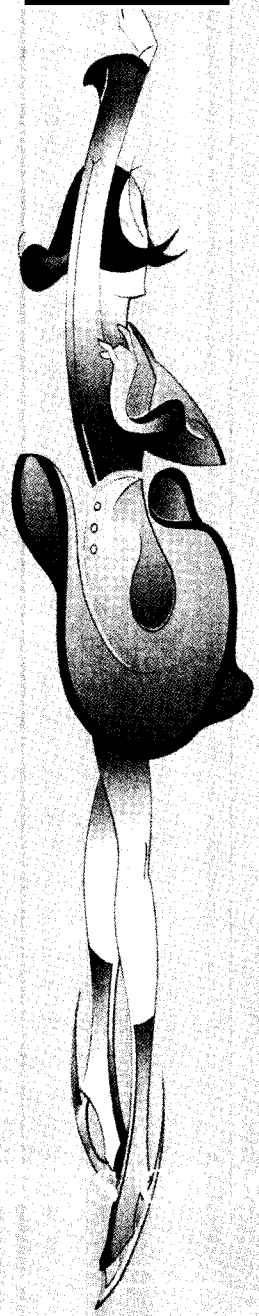

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lavishly supplied with small shops that offer pretty displays of the likes of sausage rolls, custard tarts, Eccles cakes, pork pies, and cream buns, along with tea, coffee, tables, and chairs. Many of these places leave their doors open, exuding odors of spices and new-baked bread to demoralize passers-by.

The third danger is Vikings. The Danes and Norwegians who harried the coasts of their southern neighbors from the eighth to the early eleventh century were not exclusively hit-and-run raiders. They occasionally sent large expeditions inland. One such force, commanded by Ivar the Boneless, overran northern England in 866. Traders and settlers followed, quickly converting the unenterprising Saxon town of Eoforwic into an active international port, which they called Jorvik. Saxon rulers did not take meekly to Norse incursion, and exactly who controlled Jorvik, and how, appears to have been a matter of some dispute, but Erik Bloodaxe was definitely King in 948, after having been ousted from Norway by his brother Hakon. He was soon tossed out of Jorvik as well, got himself reinstated in 952, was re-evicted two years later, and shortly fell in battle. This can hardly be called a success story by modern standards, but Norse royalty was not expected to die in bed. Erik became the symbol of the reconstruction of life in Jorvik after an archaeological dig took place from 1976 to 1981 in a part of York known as Coppergate. The King even appears on souvenir T-shirts, as a coarsely savage face peering out of thickets of dark hair—although for all the evidence that survives, the man may have been a fine-featured, well-barbered blond.

The Coppergate dig became possible because a shopping center was planned for the area, and the York Archaeological Trust, a registered charity devoted, among other aims, to something called rescue archaeology, seized the opportunity for a thorough examination of the ground. The diggers found, preserved in waterlogged soil, enough material to permit the re-creation of a small street of tenth-century shops and houses. This is called the Jorvik Viking Centre and is located near where it originally lay—that is, under the shopping complex. Anyone who visits the exhibit is in danger of forgetting the rest of York in order to chase Viking relics from one museum to another. Vikings are addictive.

The center's entrance, at street level, offers some restrained displays and information of a "forget the horned helmets" sort, beyond which the visitor is escorted to a seat in one of several small, topless cars resembling golf carts. In dim light the vehicle slides silently off—backward—down a ramp alongside two pale figures in modern dress moving briskly up a staircase. Of course, they are not really moving, nor are the figures that seemingly follow, among them an eighteenth-century fop, an Elizabethan trumpeter, a monk, and, finally, a scruffy peasant. Altogether these figures, the work of Derek Freeborn, represent ten centuries of York's history and about thirty generations.

The progress downward is in fact a neatly contrived illusion. The little car pauses, swivels about, and starts headfirst out of the shadowy past into well-lit and noisy Jorvik on an October day in the year 948. The date is arbitrary. It was chosen because in the fall of that year the great Icelandic poet Egil Skallagrimsson, a bitter and dangerous enemy of Erik Bloodaxe's, lost his ship at the mouth of the Humber. Instead of trying to evade the King, Egil rode straight to Jorvik on a borrowed horse and bargained his way out of execution by composing and reciting a poem in praise of Erik's valor

> Men's guardian Eirik
> Fought death off

and generosity.

> Always he gives well.
> All seafarers tell
> How he warms their hearts
> With his generous arts.

Safe out of Jorvik, Egil changed his song to

> That killer-king is the
> kind who're better off dead.

Lies have always been a poet's privilege.

The sounds the Viking Centre offers (it promises sights and smells as well) are loosely based on that episode, for although *Egils saga* can hardly be trusted as pure fact, Christine E. Fell, of the University of Nottingham, needing a focus for the talk of Jorvik citizens, had little else to go on. Besides, she has translated *Egils saga*, in collaboration with John Lucas. Recorded voices fill the ear, chatting, arguing, singing, and squabbling as incomprehensibly as seabirds unless one understands Icelandic. That language is considered the nearest surviving equivalent of Old Norse,

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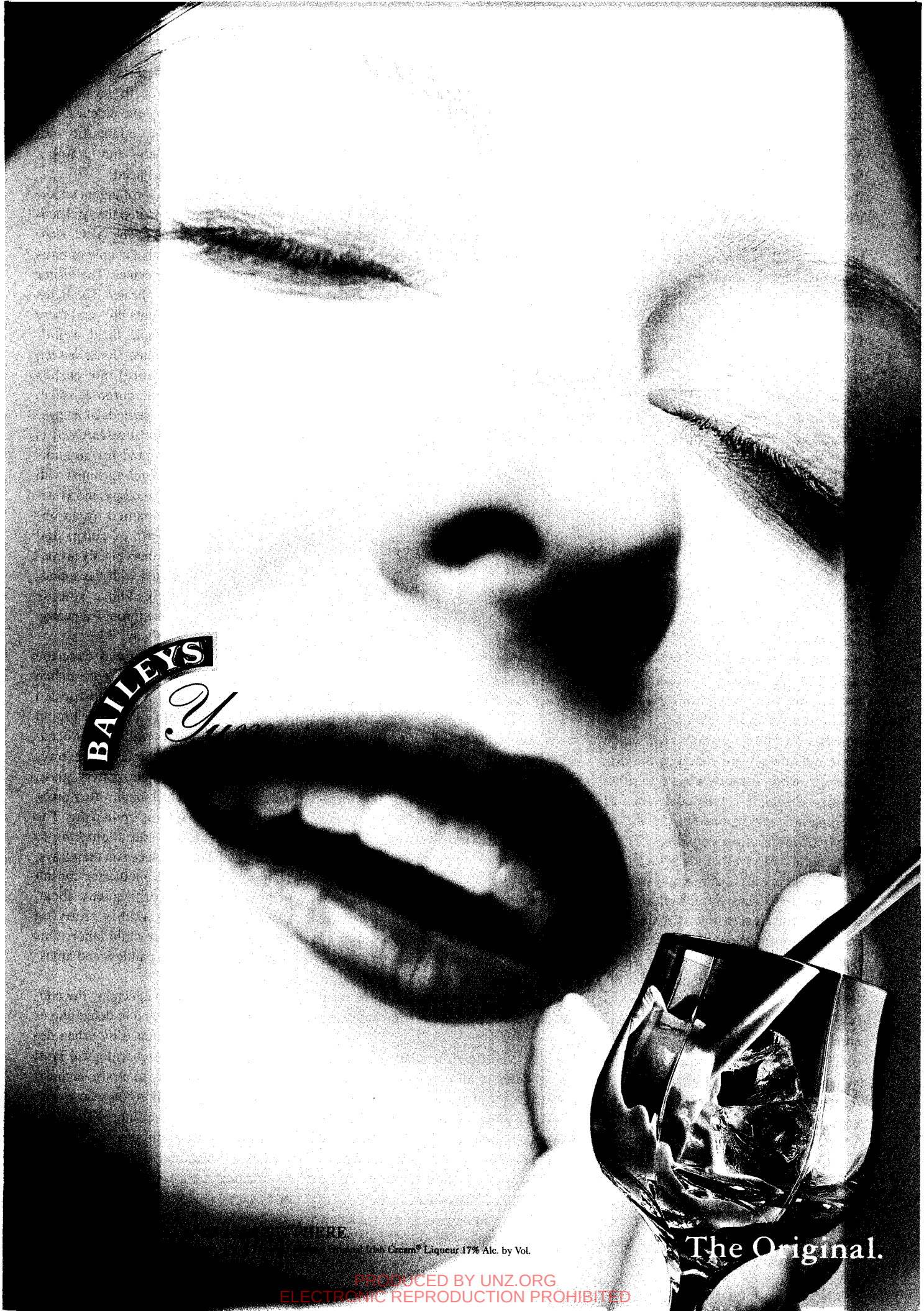

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and Fell has ingeniously used it for a series of vignettes. The invisible speakers are Icelanders—some of them, to Fell's regret, subject to influences from modern Scandinavia. The whole linguistic situation, with texts in both Icelandic and English, can be examined in an engaging pamphlet titled "Jorvikinga Saga."

The narrow street down which the cars proceed, past wandering dogs, pecking chickens, flapping geese, and dozing cats (more of Freeborn's work), is lined with low thatched buildings made of vertical planks or wattle. Some structures are shops, some dwellings. In the houses a woman scolds a lounging kinsman for overconsumption of ale, another grinds herbs, and old men gossip, while a young girl denounces her brattish little brother across the street.

In the shops a well-dressed couple consult a jeweler and prepare to pay with broken silver rather than coin. A woodcarver listens resignedly to a garrulous, nonbuying browser. A bone-carver makes, among other things, combs—of which quite a number were found in the dig. Their presence supports a not altogether reliable chronicle attributed to John of Wallingford, who reported on the wicked habits of his heathen neighbors. Those scoundrels daily washed their faces and combed their hair, bathed and donned fresh clothes every Saturday, and bedecked themselves with frivolous ornaments, all for the purpose of seducing the daughters of Saxon nobles.

All these life-size mannequins, the work of Graham Ibbeson, are expressively posed and dressed in the softly brilliant colors produced by the natural dyes of old. Their faces were at first necessarily modeled on those of modern people, and this circumstance has worried the center's conscientious officers. What people of the Viking age really looked like is not to be learned from a bare skull, and though skulls are available from a suitable cemetery, the expert work required to recover the faces of the living owners has until recently been very slow and very expensive. A much faster and cheaper reconstruction process was developed at the University College Hospital in London. Designed originally for medical use and later adopted by the police, it involves a low-power laser beam, a video camera, and a computer—plus a good amount of finishing work. Eight such citizens have been created, and more are expected. There is no guarantee that the skulls unearthed from that cemetery were Norse. They could have been owned by Saxons.

The cars pass through Jorvik at approximately walking pace—less than brisk, faster than an amble. One may wish for less speed, but more time to look at the people might well destroy the illusion of reality that has been so successfully created. Created, that is, except where smells are concerned. The advertised smells of Jorvik prove to be woodsmoke, apples, and a faint whiff of ammonia. The smells of the living Jorvik would have included curing leather, livestock, fish pier, garbage dumps, and open latrines. According to reliable report, these aromas were provided when the center opened, and so effectively that time-travelers fell ill or cried for gas masks. Mercy has been practiced.

YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Scenes of daily life in tenth-century Jorvik. Laser technology was used in making the head of the mannequin at right

TECHNOLOGY, scholarship, art, and good taste all cost money, and the construction of the Viking center demanded a great deal more of that than the York Archaeological Trust, or the city of York, or any relevant government agency could supply. Funds were procured through the enthusiasm and generosity of Ian Skipper, an entrepreneur, for whom an attached gallery is named. When the center opened, in 1984, its creators calculated that if all went well, the costs would be paid off sometime in the nineties. The place was an immediate, a fantastic, success, paying off all debts and turning a profit with astonishing speed.

The trust, with money rolling in, undertook a second project, called the Archaeological Resource Center. The ARC occupies a remodeled church a couple of turns away from the Viking center. The visitor is first placed in a tiny theater. The lights go down, the screen lights up—and there is Indiana Jones. A simple, lucid, well-illustrated (Jones is seen no more) talk ensues on the purpose, value, and methods of archaeological research. It is designed for an audience unacquainted with archaeology and is accompanied by an obbligato of chirps and murmurs plainly unconnected with the soundtrack. These sounds come through a nearby doorway.

What was once the main body of the church has been transformed into a large open room containing low tables with chairs occupied by children. On the tables are trays holding fragments of bone, pottery, glass, metal—all bits of the small, often problematic debris that turns up in a dig. The children are sorting and attempting to identify and date the pieces on their trays. They confer with one another or consult with the adults who drift quietly about, and they are unmistakably enjoying themselves. This is not child labor. This is history learned in a painless and amusing way.

Dedicated as it is to educating the public about archaeology and to defending or preserving sites threatened by urban development, the York Archaeological Trust has devised a fine way to arouse enthusiasm for its work in those on whose support it must rely in the future. The ARC juvenile-fun program should produce, someday, volunteer diggers and even professional archaeologists—all because of a shopping complex. Great traders that they were, the Jorvikers would surely approve.

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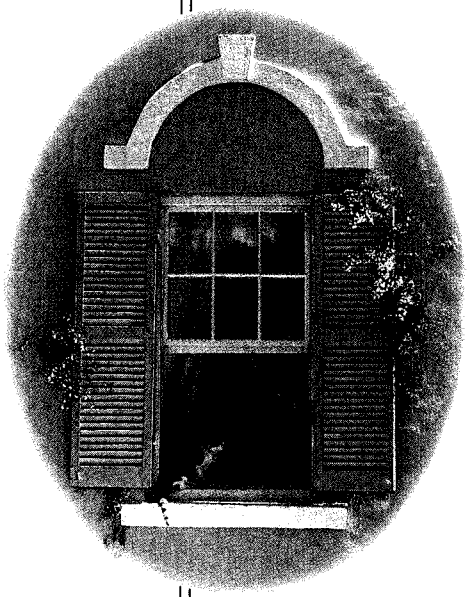
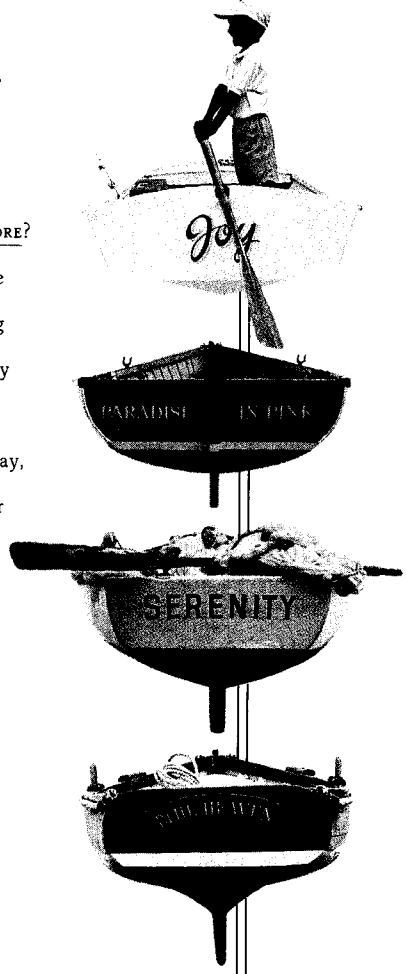
BERMUDA SHORTS

On feeling Pacific by the Atlantic.





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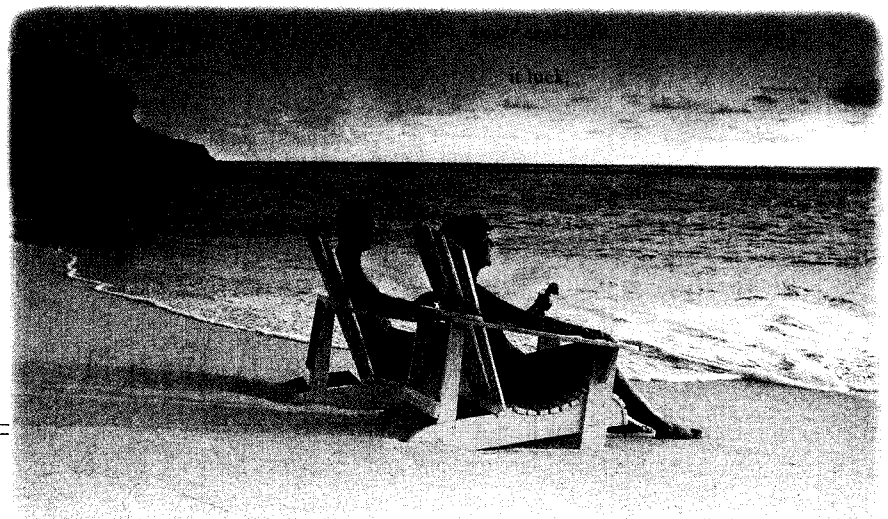

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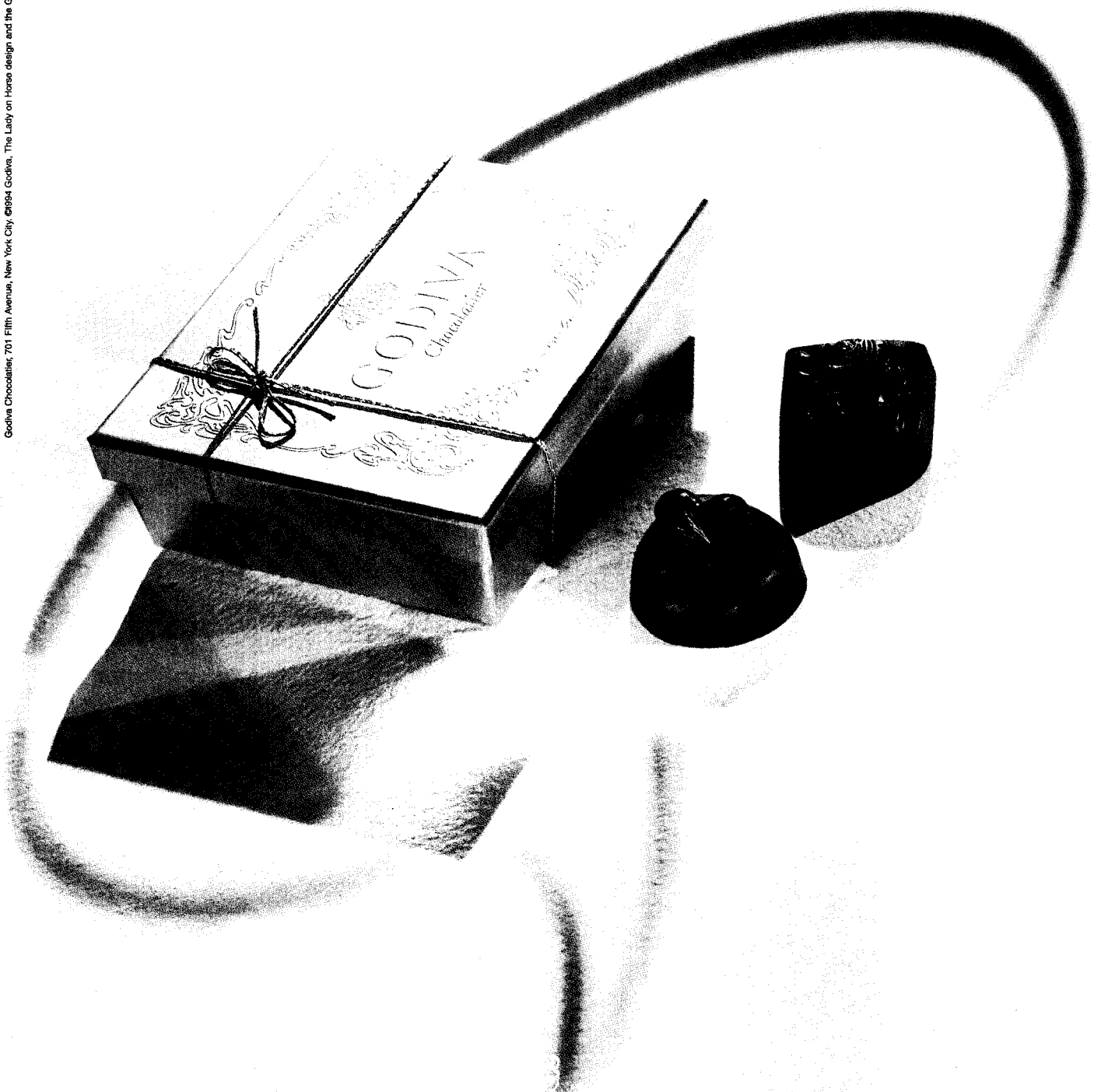

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THE NEW INTELLECTUALS

by ROBERT S. BOYNTON

Nearly a decade after an influential book declared the public intellectual extinct, an impressive group of African-American writers and thinkers have emerged to revive and revitalize that role. They are bringing moral imagination and critical intelligence to bear on the definingly American matter of race—and reaching beyond race to voice what one calls "the commonality of American concern"

ONE of the few things most intellectuals will agree on in public is that the age of the public intellectual is over. By and large, American intellectuals are private figures, their difficult books written for colleagues only, their critical judgments constrained by the boundaries of well-defined disciplines. Think of an intellectual today, and chances are he is a college professor whose "public" barely extends beyond the campus walls.

This was not always the case. Originally an intellectual was someone who was very much engaged in the public realm; the term itself was coined to describe those who waged the campaign in defense of Captain Alfred Dreyfus in 1898, Émile Zola among them. Further designating an intellectual as "public" would have struck a late-nineteenth-century listener as tautological, if not absurd. By then the core elements of a definition of the public intellectual were already in place: he was a writer, informed by a strong moral impulse, who addressed a general, educated audience in accessible language about the most important issues of the day.

Holding desperately to our familiar turf, we engage in that ceaseless contention whose uneasily accepted but unrejectable purpose is the projection of an ever more encompassing and acceptable definition of our corporate identity as Americans.

—RALPH ELLISON

That the charges against Dreyfus stemmed from anti-Semitism lent those intellectuals defending him an aura of Jewishness, and this association with the word was strengthened when the Jewish immigrants on New York's Lower East Side who gathered together in the early 1900s to study American literature also called themselves intellectuals.

Today our image of the public intellectual is locked safely in the past, associated almost exclusively with the literary and social critics who gathered around the *Partisan Review* in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Such writers as Philip Rahv, Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling, Alfred Kazin,

Illustrations by Steve Pietzsch

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Irving Howe, and Daniel Bell formed the core of the New York Intellectuals, a group famous for its brazen style, which Howe once described as a combination of "free-lance dash, peacock strut [and] knockout synthesis."

The world of the *Partisan Review* was one in which ideas mattered and battles were waged in small, well-read journals—the historian Richard Hofstadter called the *Partisan Review* the "house organ of the American intellectual community." The favored form of expression was the literary essay; although wide-ranging and often demanding, it was free of technical jargon. Composed with the care of the expert and the passion of the anti-specialist, these essays moved easily between literary and political judgments before bringing them together in a larger moral conclusion. As cultural radicals, the New Yorkers synthesized socialist politics and literary modernism, internationalizing the culture of America by bringing the best of European arts and letters to its shores. They also held convictions about the primacy of high culture and the special role of the intellectual in society.

Their seemingly endless debates—over communism and the viability of an anti-Stalinist left, and, later, over competing forms of anti-communism—echoed the succession of political challenges confronting America, a sympathetic resonance that in turn gave these writers an influence far exceeding their numbers. Oppositional figures who prized their place on the margins, dissenting from conventional wisdom ("even when they agreed with it," Kazin noted), they believed that being seduced by mainstream culture was the greatest evil that could befall a true intellectual. "Alienation," Howe recalled, "was a badge we carried with pride."

Chronicled and romanticized in a flood of biographies and memoirs, the New York clan has become a veritable gold standard for public intellectuals. Now more praised than read, its members are literary curiosities in the museum of culture; even their most important works—Wilson's *To the Finland Station*, Trilling's *Liberal Imagination*, Kazin's *On Native Grounds*, Bell's *The End of Ideology*, Rahv's *Image and Idea*—are largely ignored or out of print.

The public intellectual's death knell was sounded by Russell Jacoby in his book *The Last Intellectuals* (1987), an indictment of contemporary academic irrelevance which argued that the New Yorkers were not only America's greatest public thinkers but also its last. Academic specialists, rather than sophisticated generalists, now dominated intellectual life, leaving us duller for the loss. "One thousand radical sociologists, but no [C. Wright] Mills; three hundred critical literary theorists but no Wilson," Jacoby lamented. "If the western frontier closed in the 1890s, the cultural frontier closed in the 1950s." With its fashionably apocalyptic title and nostalgic tone, Jacoby's book was a hit, sparking a heated debate ("Hey, what about *us*?" cried an army of radical academics of every political stripe). Yet even though individual thinkers here and there were cited against Jacoby's thesis, a consensus soon formed that the era of the public intellectual was indeed over.

But no sooner had the last opinion piece about Jacoby's book been written than another group of intellectuals began getting quite a bit of attention. If they didn't conform precisely to Jacoby's ideal of the public intellectual—which bears so close a resemblance to the New Yorkers that it is difficult to use as a general definition—they were at the very least developing a significant presence by consistently and publicly addressing some of the most heavily contested issues of the day. The differences were striking, though: Whereas Jacoby's intellectuals were freelance writers based in New York, most of this group is ensconced in elite universities across the country. Whereas the New Yorkers were predominantly male and Jewish, this group includes women and is entirely gentile. In contrast to the New Yorkers, who were formed by their encounters with socialism and European culture, these intellectuals work solidly within the American grain, and are products of the political upheaval of the 1950s and 1960s. And, most significant, they are black.

A COMPLEX FATE

WHEN the best-selling author Cornel West, now a Harvard professor, and the critic Stanley Crouch appeared on *The Charlie Rose Show* to discuss the connection between race and cities during the Los Angeles riots, they contributed to a tradition of urban social philosophy which originated with Lewis Mumford. When Henry Louis Gates Jr., also of Harvard, denounced black anti-Semitism on the *New York Times* op-ed page, he no doubt reached a wider audience than Norman Podhoretz ever did with similar pieces on black-Jewish relations. When Stephen Carter, of Yale, appeared on the *Today* show to talk about the intricacies of competing affirmative-action policies in the wake of Justice Clarence Thomas's nomination, he took his place alongside Lionel Trilling and Alfred Kazin in explaining the travails of a successful minority figure in a WASP-dominated culture.

Toni Morrison, whose fiction and criticism regularly (and simultaneously) sit on best-seller lists, wins both Nobel and Pulitzer prizes; the Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson's study of freedom wins the National Book Award; Shelby Steele receives the National Book Critics Circle Award for his best-selling meditation on race; David Levering Lewis wins a Pulitzer Prize for his biography of W.E.B. Du Bois; the essayist Stanley Crouch receives a MacArthur "genius" grant; West, Gates, Morrison, and Steele all get six-figure offers for their next books. Add to these names thinkers such as Patricia Williams, William Julius Wilson, bell hooks, Houston Baker, Randall Kennedy, Michael Eric Dyson, Gerald Early, Jerry Watts, Robert Gooding-Williams, Nell Painter, Thomas Sowell, Ellis Cose, Juan Williams, Lani Guinier, Glenn Loury, Michelle Wallace, Manning Marable, Adolph Reed, June Jordan, Walter Williams, and Derrick Bell, among others, who appear in magazines and newspapers and on television programs around the country, and one begins to sus-

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pect that we are witnessing something bigger than a random blip on the screen of public intellectual culture.

In addressing a large and attentive audience about today's most pressing issues, these thinkers have begun taking their places as the legitimate inheritors of the mantle of the New York Intellectuals. Street-smart, often combative, and equipped with a strong moral sense, they, too, have a talent for shaking things up. This is not at all to say that the current constellation represents America's first black public intellectuals, which would be to ignore the tremendous contributions of such figures as Alain Locke, W.E.B. Du Bois, St. Clair Drake, E. Franklin Frazier, John Hope Franklin, and many others. Rather, the claim is that although opinions may differ about the work of individual contemporary authors, *as a group* they are indisputably receiving extraordinary attention, especially considering the marginal role of the intellectual in America. Nearly all between the ages of roughly thirty-five and fifty-five, the new black intellectuals have achieved a level of recognition usually reserved for near-emeritus figures with numerous books behind them and few years ahead.

How have they become so popular? In addition to their individual achievements and talent, a number of external factors have helped give them prominence. Four are particularly important: They have unprecedented access to the mass-circulation print media. They have been sought out by the electronic media, and shows like *Nightline*, *Today*, and *The Oprah Winfrey Show* give them extraordinary visibility. Those who are professors—and most are—have used their prestigious university positions to extend their influence beyond the academy. And, finally, they have benefited from America's current concern about race, serving as experts on everything from the L.A. riots and affirmative action to the nominations of Clarence Thomas and Lani Guinier, and *anything* having to do with Louis Farrakhan. They have, indeed, benefited from post–Cold War America's shift in attention from ideological movements abroad to racial issues at home. The central place that the New Yorkers held by virtue of Cold War America's fixation on communism is now occupied by black intellectuals in a society obsessed with race.

Surprisingly, given their newfound prominence, a number of contemporary black thinkers who aspire to be public intellectuals find themselves in a genuine quandary. Having distinguished themselves by their analysis of racial subjects, they must now widen their scope and address broader political questions; having received accolades as academic specialists, they must now address a general audience. Secure in their place at the center of mainstream intellectual culture, they must now endure the criticisms of those who accuse them of having shed their "authentic" minority identification and of selling out. Today's African-American public intellectuals are juggling a dizzying number of often conflicting identities and allegiances.

If it is the intellectual's job to pose unanswerable questions, the particular burden of the American intellectual—at least since Emerson—is to reflect on what it means to be an "American." Americans, as Henry James once wrote, have a complex fate, which manifests itself differently in successive generations. An essentially protean concept, the idea of Americanness is revised and updated as each ascending ethnic group fashions a definition that will encompass it. A similar process of reinterpretation is involved in defining what it means to be an intellectual. The New Yorkers devoted much of their careers to grappling with the demands of being both American and intellectuals, as well as to pondering the significance of their Jewish identities in their work. The current focus by many black thinkers on the significance of their American citizenship is further proof that they are reviving America's rich public-intellectual tradition.

Like so many stories these days, this one is about blacks and Jews—or, more precisely, about how one ethnically marginalized group of public intellectuals has followed in the footsteps of another. The suggestion that contemporary black thinkers are heirs to a tradition best known for its Jewishness, at a bad time for relations between the two groups, is ironic. At first glance it might even seem that the cultural differences separating them so far outweigh their intellectual similarities that it would be wise simply to agree with Jacoby that the age of the public intellectual is indeed over.

Another possibility, however, is that the conventional definition of the public intellectual, as formulated and popularized by Jacoby, is itself obsolete. For all their influence, the New Yorkers spoke to a small literate public that, like them, is largely gone. In its place has emerged a larger educated public whose post–Cold War concerns about race, gender, and economic security have little to do with the ones that shaped the world half a century ago. If we take seriously the requirement that a public intellectual's relevance be to the educated public he serves, and if we admit the existence of such a public today (fragmentary though it may be), it is incumbent on us to take a closer look at the public thinkers we have, rather than mourning the ones we don't. In chronicling the demise of a particular constellation of thinkers, Jacoby got it half right. What he missed, however, was the emergence of a new public and the new public intellectuals who speak to it. Black intellectuals are important not only because they address an emerging set of public concerns but also because they provide a viable, if radically different, image of what a public intellectual can be.

BLACKNESS AS THE BEGINNING

RECENTLY several black intellectuals have been redirecting their attention from race-based identity politics to the importance of American citizenship for race relations. That is, they have thought less exclusively about the meaning of "blackness" and more inclusively about what it means to be an African-American—taking

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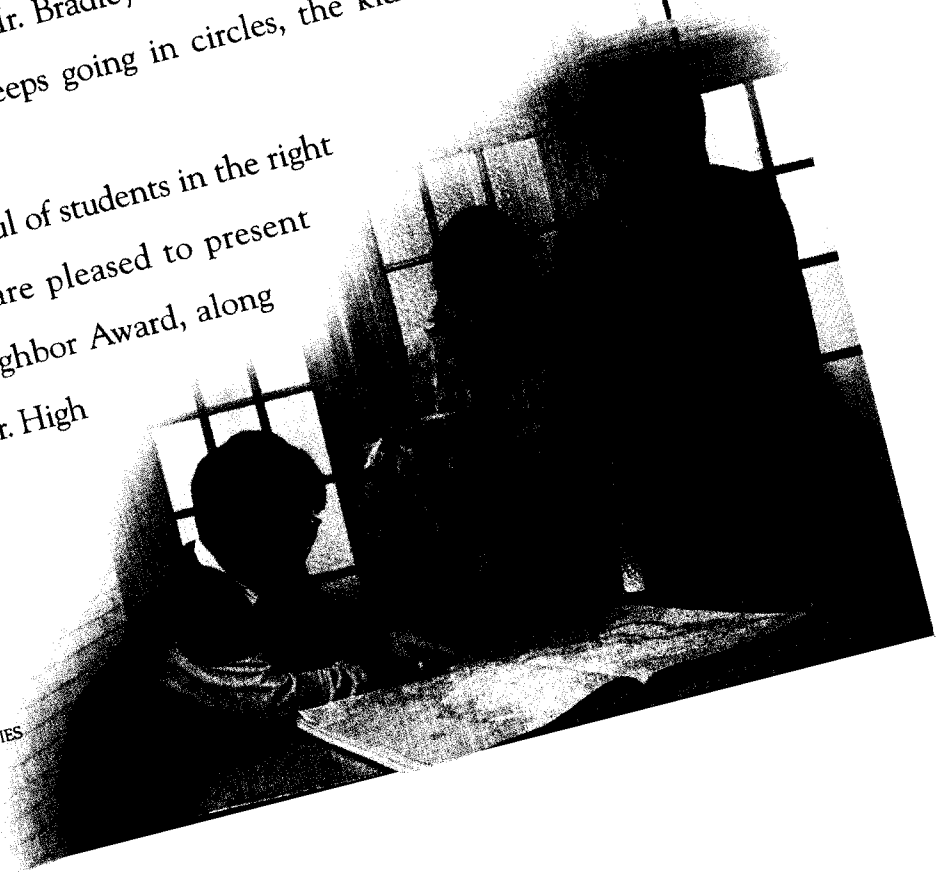

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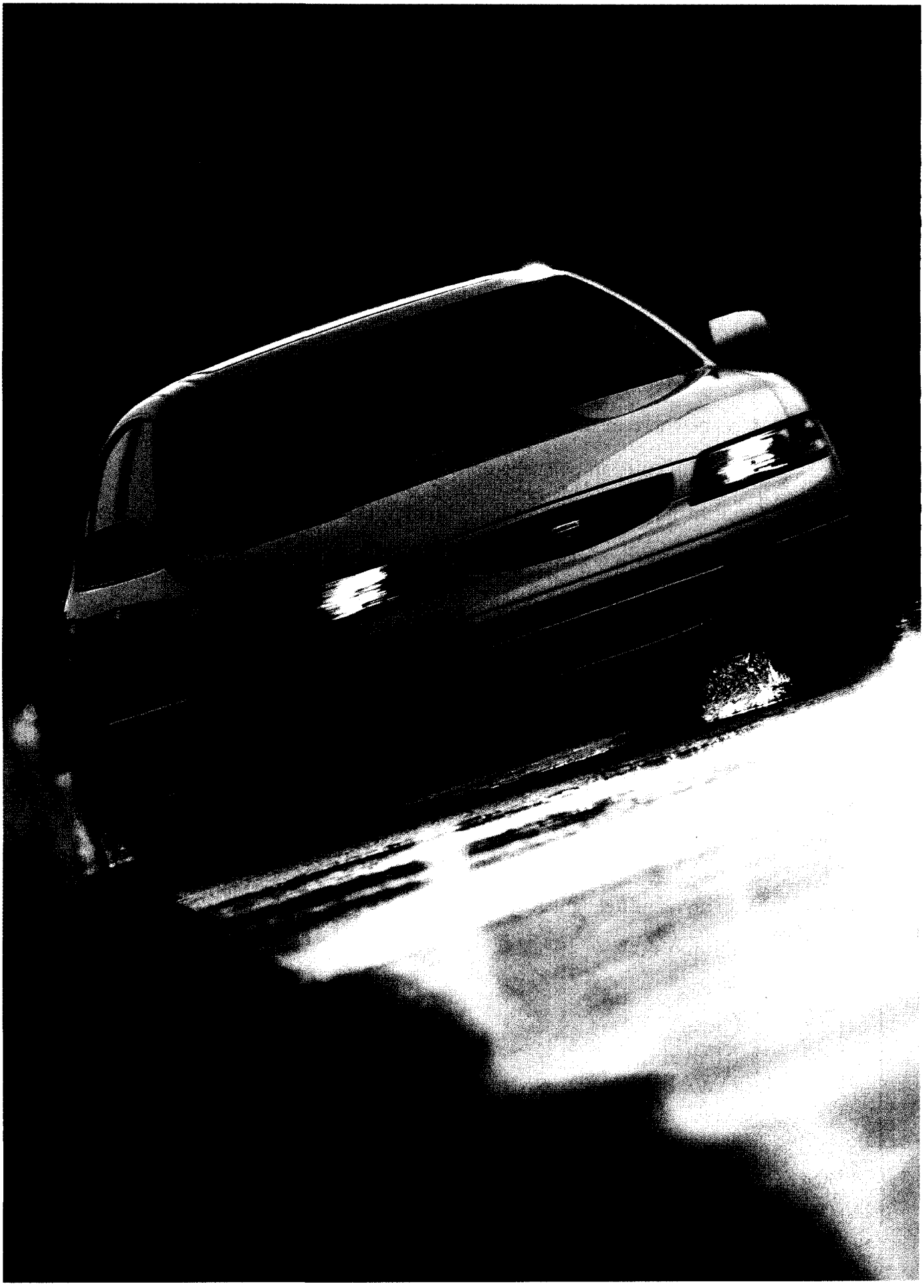

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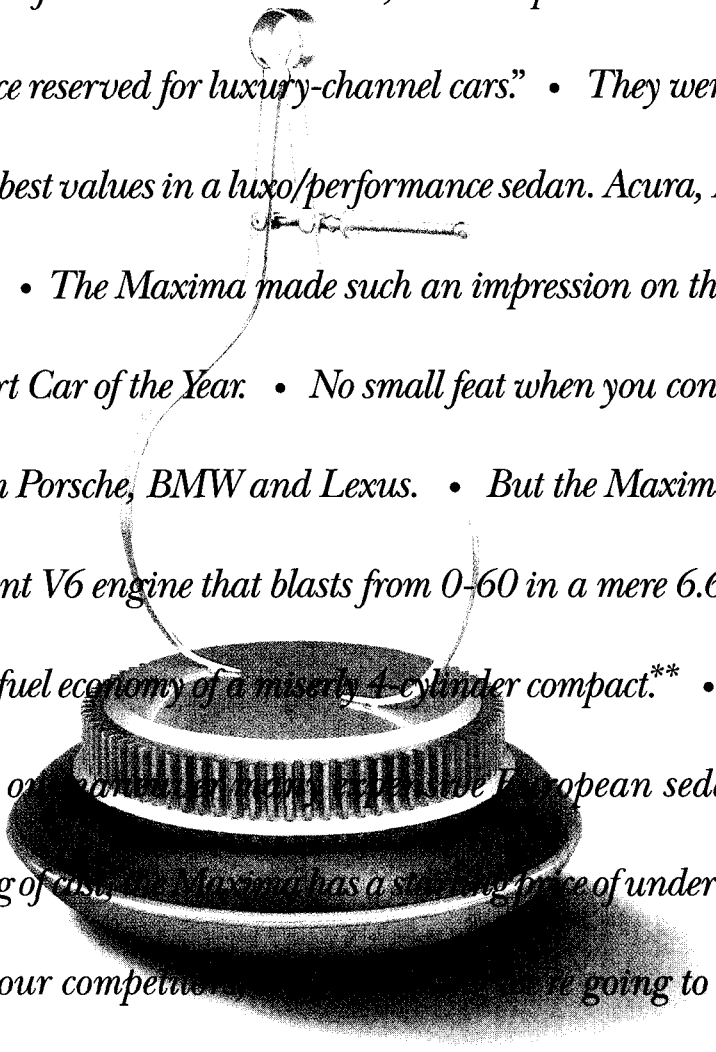

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pains to scrutinize both sides of the hyphen. Most important, by pointing out the pitfalls of rigid identity politics, they have sought to distance themselves from the notion of victimization that has so dominated race- and ethnicity-specific rhetoric, whether formulated by blacks or by whites.

This shift is reminiscent of one Ralph Ellison described as having taken place in Jewish literature. "What the Jewish American writer had to learn before he could find his place was the American-ness of his experience," Ellison wrote. "He had to see himself as American and project his Jewish experience as an experience unfolding within this pluralistic society." Only then, Ellison explained, could the Jewish writer "project this variant of the American experience as a metaphor for the whole." He predicted that black writers would eventually do the same. If Ellison was right and contemporary black intellectuals are moving toward a more pluralistic model, then perhaps a figure like Irving Howe, rather than one like Malcolm X, is standing at the end of the road that black thinkers are now traveling—leading one to wonder whether black and Jewish public thinkers have more in common than is ordinarily thought.

Anyone who steeps himself in the writings of these groups knows that there is no such person as *the* New York Intellectual or *the* black intellectual; the designations are necessarily crude and describe certain figures much better than others. Any broad assumptions one makes about the ideological agreement within either group quickly dissolve once one begins unpacking individual substantive positions. But for all their imprecision, these broad groupings are important, if only because they provide a cultural context for a particular thinker's work; at some level his or her thought will always be perceived as being distinctly black or Jewish. Whereas a university professor can locate himself with some precision within a disciplinary matrix, a public intellectual must often wear a label not of his own choosing.

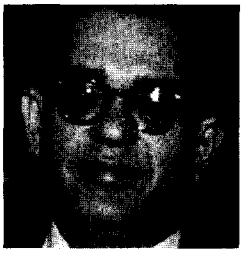
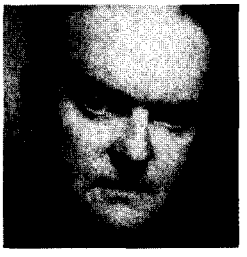
The paths that black and Jewish thinkers have taken to resolve their feelings toward America—their cultural journey from the margin to the center—have been decidedly different. Although the New Yorkers are perhaps best known for their Jewishness, when one looks closely at their work one finds that it wasn't until relatively late in their careers that they made their ethnic heritage a conscious component of their intellectual lives. In contrast, most black public intellectuals have had the concept of blackness at the very center of their thinking from the start. This is not to say that they have a common attitude toward their racial identity but only that blackness was the beginning (and for some the end) of their intellectual journey.

Whereas it took the New Yorkers a lifetime to balance the competing claims of Jewishness and American citizenship, today's black intellectuals, coming of age somewhere between the civil-rights movement and the Reagan backlash, were thrown into racial-identity politics from the very start. One might say that whereas the New Yorkers spent a good part of their careers discovering their Jewishness, African-American intellectuals were, in an existential sense, born black. The most important conviction these two groups share, however, is that we can understand the larger world only by struggling first with the fundamental question of who we are.

HUGGING ALONENESS

THE very fact of being an American packed an extraordinary wallop for the New York Intellectual. "I was the first American child, their offering to the strange new God," Kazin wrote, discussing his Russian immigrant parents. "I was to be the monument of their liberation from the shame of being what they were." Paradoxically, this new America was little enjoyed by the immigrants themselves; that privilege was for their children. In addition to being their families' first "real" Americans, this first generation received a double inheritance—they were the children of immigrants and of Jews. Trying to reconcile these allegiances with their American identity proved so emotionally difficult for many that they simply abandoned both, choosing instead to lead lives that were culturally and religiously assimilated.

The New Yorkers were also thrown into a world thick with leftist politics. For intellectuals coming of age before the collapse of the Socialist International, the idea of a brotherhood of man carried tremendous weight. "Everybody I knew in New York was a Socialist," Kazin remembered in a memoir. As a fourteen-year-old, Daniel Bell handed out political leaflets on street corners, while at City College bitter disputes raged between the Trotskyites of Alcove 1 and the Stalinists of Alcove 2. "What happened at Berkeley, once in a lifetime," Meyer Liben wrote, "might happen . . . at City every Thursday between 12 and 2 in the afternoon."

Some of the New York Intellectuals (from left): Alfred Kazin, Philip Rahv, Edmund Wilson, and Irving Howe

Left to right: UPI/Bettmann; The Granger Collection, NY; Brandeis University Photo Dept.; courtesy of Nicholas Howe

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As intellectuals, they adopted a cosmopolitan style; as writers, they sought a place in the tradition of American literature. Being Jewish didn't play much of a role in either pursuit. "The New York intellectuals," Howe wrote, "were the first group of Jewish writers to come out of the immigrant milieu who did not define themselves through a relationship, nostalgic or hostile, to memories of Jewishness." Howe was undoubtedly correct. Indeed, it was hardly an accident that the New Yorkers chose to cut their intellectual eyeteeth on the classics of the WASP canon, with Howe composing studies of Sherwood Anderson and Faulkner, Trilling writing on Matthew Arnold and E. M. Forster, Kazin on late-nineteenth-century American literature, Rahv on Henry James, and Sidney Hook on American Pragmatism. So far were the New Yorkers from embracing their Jewishness that Norman Podhoretz has recalled that while he was a student of Trilling's at Columbia University, he was "disgusted" by "the idea that because a man happened to be Jewish it was incumbent upon him to study Jewish culture."

After the war, upon learning about the horrors of the Holocaust, the New Yorkers began the long process of confronting their Jewish heritage. "We could no longer escape the conviction that, blessing or curse," Howe wrote, "Jewishness was an integral part of our life."

Irving Kristol explored his Jewish identity by writing about the state of Israel; Kazin expressed his in his memoirs, one volume of which he titled simply *New York Jew*. Leslie Fiedler argued that Jews, caught between America and Europe, offered a unique perspective on the quandary of the American artist. Studying Maimonides, Bell uncovered powerful political themes and declared that "to be a Jew is to be part of a community woven by memory." In the fifties and sixties Howe edited collections of Yiddish literature, and in 1976 he published the best-selling *World of Our Fathers*, a history of Eastern European Jews in America. The grandsons of Hasidim, Podhoretz observed, had traveled "through Wordsworth in order to get to the *shtetl*."

Writers like Howe, Kazin, Bell, Harold Rosenberg, Clement Greenberg, and Paul Goodman were moved to speculate about the complex ways in which their Jewish identity meshed with their American one. To Isaac Rosenfeld, Jews were suited to be social critics because they were "specialist[s] in alienation." Rosenberg developed the idea of the "partial Jew," who, although a product of his Jewish past, could also borrow from other traditions. Howe was drawn to a form of secular Jewishness whose combination of cultural familiarity and intellectual marginality "seemed to speak back to me as no other culture quite did." Kazin described life as a Jewish outsider as being "at the heart of things." He wrote, "I hugged my aloneness . . . as a sign of our call to create the future." Where once a passion for socialism had provided potent fuel for their thinking, now a rediscovered sense of Jewishness supplied a similar kind of inspiration.

THE PERSONAL IS THE HISTORICAL

FOR contemporary black intellectuals, the defining event of their lives was unquestionably the civil-rights movement. Playing a role that Marx believed was the exclusive property of the proletariat, African-Americans in the 1950s and 1960s were nothing less than the revolutionary subjects of history. However else one judges the legacy of those decades, one must surely agree with Stephen Carter when he argues that "the massive change in the legal and social status of black Americans was perhaps the most revolutionary aspect of the sixties." Although many members of today's generation of intellectuals were too young to take an active part in the protests and marches, their belief in the necessary and intimate connection between race and politics was gleaned from these events.

Shaped in response to a movement that explicitly used the rhetoric of citizenship to articulate its demands for political equality, this generation's conscious racial identity was qualitatively different from those of the generations that preceded it. Although this group's fate as Americans was still complex, it was a complexity in which the ideas of blackness and American citizenship sat in a determinate—if uneasy—relationship to each other. The Brown decision in 1954, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and other legislation combined to create the conditions for a notion of African-American citizenship that was a radical break from the past. Even in the face of brutal and persistent racism, to be black and American was now also to be legally empowered. The very concept of rights, the legal scholar Patricia Williams argues, "feels new in the mouths of most black people. The concept of rights, both positive and negative, is the marker of our citizenship, our relation to others."

The New Yorkers devoted much of their careers to grappling with the demands of being both American and intellectuals, and the Jews among them to pondering the significance of their Jewish identities as well. The focus by black thinkers on the significance of their American citizenship is proof that they are reviving America's public-intellectual tradition.

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In this sense, young black intellectuals in the early 1970s understood the possibly beneficial and augmenting connection between their ethnic and American identities.

Like the New Yorkers, these black intellectuals were born into a world fundamentally different from that of their parents, a world whose increased opportunities they did not themselves have the burden of bringing into existence. "Less than four years after my birth, something happened that would indelibly mark me and my peers for life," Gates has written of the Brown decision, "something that would open up another world to us, a world our parents could never have known." This is not to say that the black intellectuals grew up, or are now, entirely free of America's racist legacy, but only that they were spared the most brutal legally sanctioned impediments that their parents had taken for granted; the struggling continued, but a dramatic breakthrough had been made. Irving Howe observed that the second generation of New Yorkers "came late," in the sense that they missed the battles of the 1920s, fought in the name of modernism and radicalism; similarly, there is a sense of belatedness among this generation of black intellectuals.

Post–Malcolm X, post–Martin Luther King Jr., the younger among them came of age at a distinctive period in the history of race relations: between the time of an inclusive movement, which appealed to what Stanley Crouch calls the "commonality of American concern," and that of a separatist one, which held that blacks could survive only apart from white society. So situated, they enjoyed the fruits of both the civil-rights and the black-nationalist vision without being entirely beholden to either. In this context they developed a hybrid form of racial rhetoric that brought together the lessons of black self-esteem and a belief in the importance of citizens' rights.

This link provided a unique context for a number of political and intellectual developments. One has been the inclination of black thinkers—regardless of their training—to become "race experts" by virtue of their being black. This has been encouraged by those in the media (and elsewhere) who ask them to represent the "black perspective" on any given issue, the assumption being that all black experience has an essential nature—a simplistic assumption that would never be applied to whites.

The belief that there exists an organic connection between one's intellectual sensibility and one's race has not been uncommon. Henry Louis Gates recalls how, as a graduate student in English, he felt a responsibility to study black literature by analyzing what he "thought it was saying to me about the nature of my experiences as a black person living in a historically racist Western culture. . . . [as if I had] embarked upon a mission for all black people."

Among the most striking characteristics one notices in the work of many black intellectuals is how much is written in a deeply personal style, a style usually eschewed by academics. Coming from very different ideological perspectives, Stephen Carter, Shelby Steele, bell hooks, Patricia Williams, Derrick Bell, and others have devoted much of their work to exploring what the literary theorist Houston Baker calls "the African-American autobiographical moment"—in a genre dubbed "autocritography" by Gates, whose most recent book, *Colored People*, is, fittingly, a memoir.

"It is the birthright of the black writer," Gates suggests in a review for *The New Yorker* of the journalist Nathan McCall's memoir, *Makes Me Wanna Holler*, "that his experiences, however personal, are automatically historical." In the work of the most talented writers, this personal style carries a certain revelatory power, as in James Baldwin's marvelously introspective, brooding essays. But not all intellectuals are gifted writers, and for many black thinkers this historical burden is simply too much, resulting in a personal writing style that is merely self-involved. Starting from the fact of their racial identity, some have been reluctant to move much beyond it—an aesthetic that is more admirable in a belletrist than in a wide-ranging public intellectual.

MAKING IT

THE New York Intellectuals' postwar rediscovery of their Jewish identity dovetailed neatly with their newfound ease with America—an attitude indicated by the 1952 *Partisan Review* symposium "Our Country and Our Culture," a cozily patriotic title that would have been unthinkable even a few years earlier. This closer identification with America had many sources, not least among them the intensifying Soviet threat. As socialism was eclipsed by anti-communism, Cold War liberalism, and eventually, for some, neo-conservatism, the once-marginal New Yorkers found a place at the very heart of the culture from which they had formerly felt so estranged.

After all, for all intents and purposes, they had won: their preferred modernist authors were fixtures in the canon, Stalinism was discredited, America was more internationalist, anti-Semitism had abated, and intellectuals were considered an important and distinct class. On a more personal level, they had successfully asserted their place as Americans; by mastering the American WASP literary and cultural canon, they had transformed it. Jews, Podhoretz remembered, were "all the rage." In order to come to terms with their Jewishness, they had conquered the culture of gentile America; in order to reconcile themselves with their Americanness, they had rediscovered their Jewish origins. What emerged was a distinctive hybrid: an intellectual with a strong attachment to both his ethnic and his national roots.

The publication of Podhoretz's *Making It*, in 1967, marked the end of the era. Part memoir, part meditation on the intellectual's lust for success, *Making It* was a declaration of independence from those thinkers who, Podhoretz believed, were ashamed of their secret longing for bourgeois fame and fortune. In contrast to the first generation of New Yorkers, Podhoretz was skeptical about the value of the pub-

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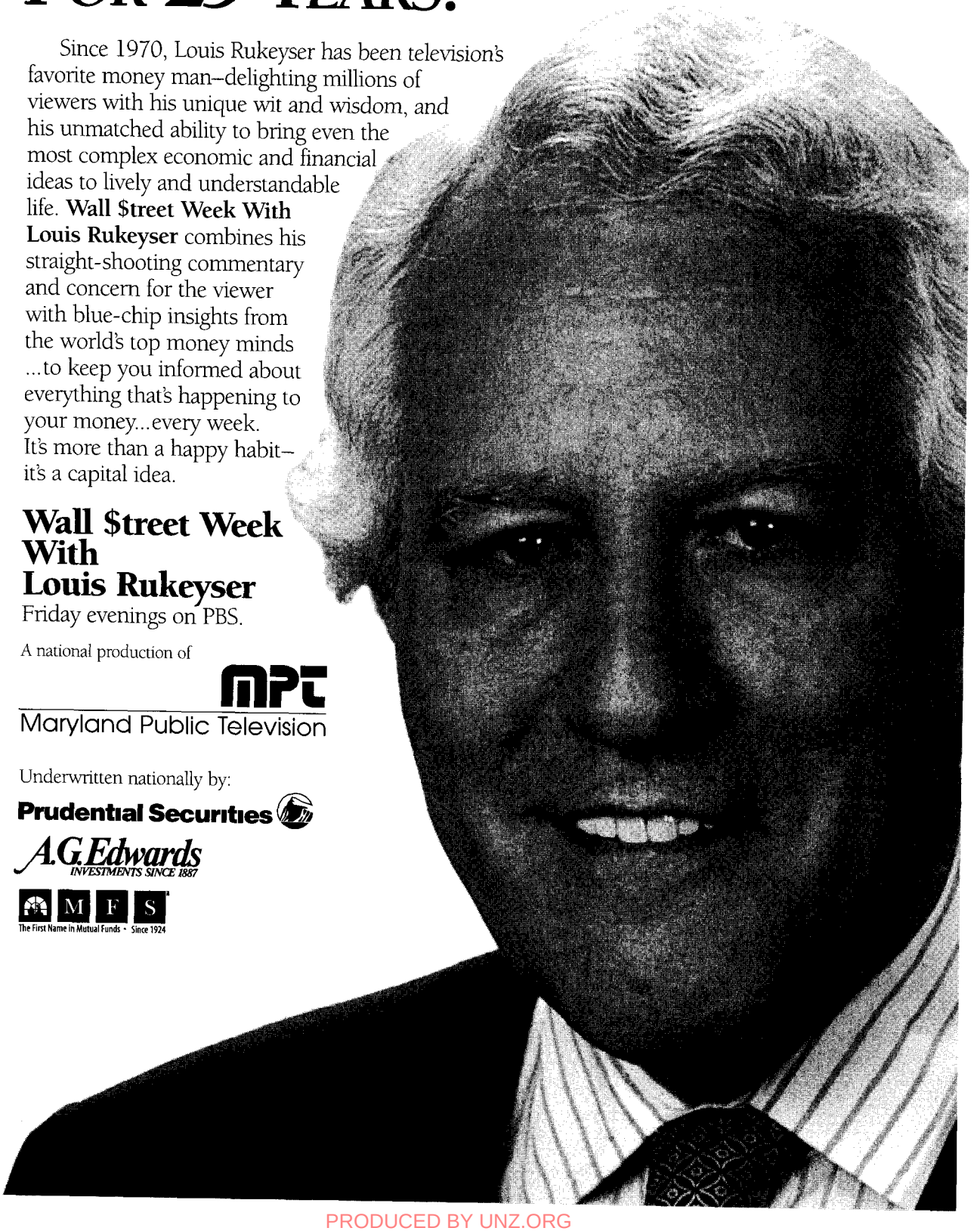

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lic intellectual's traditionally marginal position in society; he wanted to dine at the White House without being ashamed to admit he enjoyed it.

Although Podhoretz's position was brashly articulated, it was nevertheless characteristic of the rapprochement that was taking place between the New Yorkers and American society at large. It was no longer so clear just what the benefits of marginality were. Barely fifteen years after Trilling was (grudgingly) made the first Jew with a permanent position in Columbia's English department, the New Yorkers discovered that universities were eager to have them, and that a productive intellectual life could be found there—even for those, like Howe, who continued to rail against the university's corrupting and stifling influence. It was not long before Bell would observe that for the first time, America's cultural elite was composed almost entirely of academics. Bell and Nathan Glazer were hired by Harvard, Howe and Kazin by City College, Rosenberg and Saul Bellow by the University of Chicago; even the *Partisan Review*'s fiercely independent co-founder, Philip Rahv, took a job at Brandeis. Although still a cultural force to be reckoned with, the New York Intellectuals were by the mid-sixties nearly all safely ensconced in the university.

WHAT COUNTS AS CULTURE

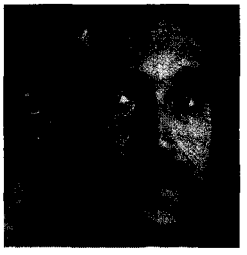
AND this was pretty much what the intellectual landscape looked like when many black intellectuals arrived at newly integrated universities in the late sixties and early seventies—the university-bound public intellectual was the rule, not the exception. For aspiring black intellectuals, role models were more likely to be found on a university faculty than in the cheap cafeterias of Greenwich Village.

As elite private universities finally opened their doors to black students, in the late sixties and early seventies, blacks' previously token representation suddenly soared—from three at Harvard in the class graduating in 1948, for example, to forty in the class of 1969, to nearly a hundred in the freshman class entering the following year. Afro-American-studies programs were established on campuses across the country in response to student protests, thereby sending out a signal that universities were willing to transform themselves by taking into account the perspectives of different racial and ethnic groups.

Arriving on campus as the influence of the radical Black Panthers was cresting, today's younger black intellectuals were more moved than formed by their nationalist ideology. By the time they were old enough to engage the Black Power movement themselves, the arguments were beginning to sound a little old. After flirting with the debate over various ideas of "comparative blackness," Gates came to the conclusion that for him, blackness was "not a material object, an absolute, or an event" but only "a trope." He expands on this insight in *Colored People*: "I want to be black, to know black, to luxuriate in whatever I might be calling blackness at any particular time, but to do so in order to come out the other side, to experience a humanity that is neither colorless nor reducible to color." With the rhetoric of civil rights as a first language, many black thinkers developed a sophisticated sense of their racial identity, more informed by history and politics than by racial metaphysics. "'Race' is *only* a sociopolitical category," Gates writes, "nothing more."

Outstanding students who ten years before would most likely have become political activists instead pursued academic careers. As a result, many developed an intellectual style with a decidedly activist edge; in the university but not completely of it, theirs is scholarship with a social purpose. This generation of public-minded academics, while notable, is hardly the first to have straddled the worlds inside and outside the university—John Dewey, William James, Sidney Hook, and C. Wright Mills are all figures whose scholarship and activism also exerted a strong mutual influence. What distinguishes these new public intellectuals from those of the past, however, is that their desire to transcend the academy was motivated almost solely by an interest in race.

The birth of black studies was a particularly important development, because it provided the institutional as well as the intellectual power base that would later prove helpful when black intellectuals began teaching at the elite universities they had attended. This was the first generation of black scholars to progress almost entirely outside traditionally black institutions like Howard and Morehouse, and it adopted a more optimistic attitude toward the possibilities afforded by an academic life. Whereas the New Yorkers had once feared that university affiliation would deprive them of their intellectual independence, they had come to see that it also gave them



Some of the new intellectuals (from left): Toni Morrison, Shelby Steele, Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Cornel West

Left to right: Nicholas MacInnes/Globe Photos; Wyatt Counts/Outline Press; Nubar Alexanian/Woodfin Camp; Karen Kuehn/Matrix

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tremendous freedom and benefits. Today's black intellectuals have learned from the New Yorkers' experiences. Presented with few intellectually rewarding alternatives, black intellectuals sensed from the beginning that the university, despite its flaws, could be valuable in helping them gain respectability for their views in a credential-obsessed society and in extending their intellectual authority beyond the academic world.

They discovered that the new, more loosely configured university of the 1970s and 1980s in many cases actually encouraged interdisciplinary thinking, *pace* Russell Jacoby, who believes that academia is inherently incapable of producing intellectual generalists.

With the creation of black studies came institutional power, as black intellectuals were able to allocate funds, recruit faculty, and establish a curriculum. If only in financial terms, today's black intellectuals wield more power than the New Yorkers, whose underfunded journals were perpetually teetering on the brink of extinction, ever did. Henry Louis Gates is a good example of such cultural empire-building: Having held increasingly influential teaching positions at Yale, Cornell, and Duke, he currently heads the Afro-American studies program and the Du Bois Institute at Harvard, co-edits the cultural-studies journal *Transition* (under the auspices of his academic publisher, Oxford University Press), and is the editor of the forthcoming *Norton Anthology of Afro-American Literature*, the mammoth *Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers*, and *Lift Every Voice*, a cultural history of the African-American experience, to be published by Random House. He is also a frequent contributor to *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Nation*, *Newsweek*, and *The New Republic*.

Clement Greenberg's brazen defense of the "general agreement among the cultivated of mankind over the ages as to what is good art and what is bad." Whereas an unshakable belief in the importance of high culture was central to the New Yorkers' mission, black thinkers have followed the general trend of blurring (if not eradicating) the high-low distinction and incorporating popular and mass culture in their scholarship. Thus Gates writes about situation comedies for *The New York Times*, and the former Modern Language Association president Houston Baker writes an entire book analyzing rap music. For them, as for most others, culture *is* the complex world we live in, encompassing everything and everyone from T. S. Eliot to Ice-T.

Which is not at all to say that black intellectuals uniformly take such an inclusive attitude toward culture; indeed, despite periodic complaints about "black censorship," the very lack of consensus concerning politics, ideology, or aesthetics is precisely what has given the black intellectual community's debates such vitality. For instance, the Harvard law professor Randall Kennedy, in his intellectual journal *Reconstruction*, recently wrote a scathing review of Baker's *Black Studies, Rap, and the Academy*, a book in which Baker argues that black scholars have a responsibility to study rap music with as much seriousness as they would any other art form. Baker criticizes "instant experts" who breezily comment on popular cultural forms despite their lack of qualifications to do so. Kennedy was unconvinced by Baker's argument and suggested playfully that Baker's book might be little more than an "elaborate parody" of black scholarship written by the editors of conservative publications like *Commentary*, *The New Criterion,* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

The shift away from racial essentialism bridges ideological differences, with both conservatives and left-leaning liberals invoking the language of citizenship. The significance of this approach is that it considers race as a manifestation of a larger American project; it conceives of the problems of African-Americans as inseparable from the problems of America.

A number of black academics have created their own programs and thereby expanded their cultural legitimacy in ways precisely tailored to their backgrounds. There is little doubt that today it is the university, rather than independent cultural critics, that determines, Gates writes, "what counts as knowledge, what counts as culture." Black thinkers who want to make changes in the wider public-intellectual culture have a better chance working from within the university than outside it.

This shift in intellectual strategies has also been encouraged by the loosening in our social definition of what counts as culture in the first place. It is difficult to imagine any contemporary combatant on the culture front putting forward

In general, we expect less from art these days, and high culture in particular does not play the transformative role once envisioned for it. The New Yorkers championed high culture in the romantic hope that the masses, once freed from their oppression, might demand the best. The New Yorkers considered themselves oppositional figures who were defending aesthetic standards, not as elitist intellectuals but as engaged citizens who believed in the redemptive power of art. Few intellectuals have such illusions any longer.

But this casual relationship to mass culture entails a further difficulty concerning the black intellectuals' self-definition: given how comfortable they are with the mainstream, are they really "oppositional" figures? Is it even important

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for today's public intellectuals—black or white—to *be* dissenters, or can the dissenting aspect of their public role be dispensed with? The answer to this may ultimately be the most important contribution that black intellectuals make to the dialogue about the appropriate role for American public intellectuals; in the end, their success in the mainstream might be most important as a sign to others that "making it" is possible. It is doubtful whether a public intellectual can be engaged in anything resembling traditional Kulturkampf while appearing on shows like *Nightline* and *Today*. Whether that matters is another question. The quandary of the contemporary black intellectual is how to be both an insider and an outsider at the same time, how to balance the requirements of truly independent thinking with the inherently coopting demands of mass public culture.

BEYOND IDENTITY POLITICS

APART from the societal changes that have helped black thinkers attain their prominence—the national obsession with race, the transformation of the university, the openness of the mainstream and electronic media—certain black thinkers have gained further attention because of the way in which they talk about race, employing a rhetorical paradigm that has often put them at odds with their colleagues. This subgroup includes, but is by no means limited to, Cornel West, Toni Morrison, Henry Louis Gates, Glenn Loury, Stephen Carter, and Stanley Crouch.

Central to this new paradigm is the explicit rejection of identity politics and the victimology that so often lies at the heart of efforts to mobilize the allegiances of racial or ethnic groups. In general, identity politics is based on the belief that social groups have certain essential characteristics that extend to all their members. It can take the innocent form of wearing a KISS ME, I'M IRISH button on Saint Patrick's Day, but it can also define a group's essence so narrowly that it isolates its members from the rest of society, degenerating into what the sociologist Todd Gitlin describes as "a grim and hermetic bravado celebrating victimization and stylized marginality." The inevitable logic of identity politics, these black intellectuals argue, leads a group to envision itself as necessarily alienated from American culture at large, and to define itself in its very essence as being victimized by the ideas or structures it opposes. For example, surveying the legacy of the Black Power and Black Aesthetic movements' attempts to dislodge the hegemonic idea of whiteness and replace it with an equally restrictive concept of blackness, Gates concludes that in the end these efforts yielded little more than "a gestural politics captivated by fetishes and feel-bad rhetoric."

In rejecting the ideological straitjacket of identity politics, these thinkers are asserting the fundamental right of African-Americans to think differently from one another. As Toni Morrison wrote after the Clarence Thomas–Anita Hill battle, "The time for undiscriminating racial unity has passed." By distancing themselves from extreme forms of identity politics—characterized by the xenophobia and anti-Semitism of demagogues like Leonard Jeffries and Louis Farrakhan—these intellectuals have begun to transform the debate over race. By explicitly rejecting victimization as a basis for African-American identity, they expand the conversation to include a greater spectrum of voices in the debate over what it means to be an American citizen.

This is not to say that their rejection of the rhetoric of victimization implies that they share a unifying political vision (they don't), but the shift away from racial essentialism bridges ideological differences, with the more conservative thinkers, like Carter, Loury, and Crouch, being as likely to invoke the language of citizenship as left-leaning liberals like West, Morrison, and Gates. Nor does it entail a blindly pro-American stance. The significance of this approach is simply that it considers race to be a manifestation of a larger American project; it conceives of the problems of African-Americans as inseparable from the problems of America. With race and citizenship as twin points on their moral compass, these thinkers alternately view the issues raised by one perspective from the position of the other.

WE GO DOWN TOGETHER

CORNEL West is the nimblest and most visible advocate of this approach, employing a dramatic oracular style that draws freely on the righteous rhetoric of the black church along with the rights-based language of progressive liberalism. Previously a professor of religion and the head of Princeton's Afro-American studies program, West was recently lured to Harvard, where he had earned his bachelor's degree (his doctorate, in philosophy, was from Princeton). In *Race Matters*, his best-selling collection of essays, West lays out a distinctive political-philosophical vision, rejecting ethnic nationalism and exploring the subtle connections between marginalized groups—blacks and Jews, for instance—who have deeply rooted common interests that, he argues, ought to bring them together. He criticizes both liberals and conservatives for viewing black people as a "problem people," rather than as "fellow American citizens with problems." If we go down, he warns, we go down together. As an alternative to racial reasoning, he suggests a framework that starts with a "frank acknowledgement of the basic humanness and Americanness of each of us." One would view the civil-rights movement, for instance, "not as an affair of skin pigmentation and racial phenotype but rather as a matter of ethical principles and wise politics."

Although critical of the civil-rights movement's legacy, Glenn Loury, a conservative economist now at Boston University, who rose to prominence in the mid-1980s for his

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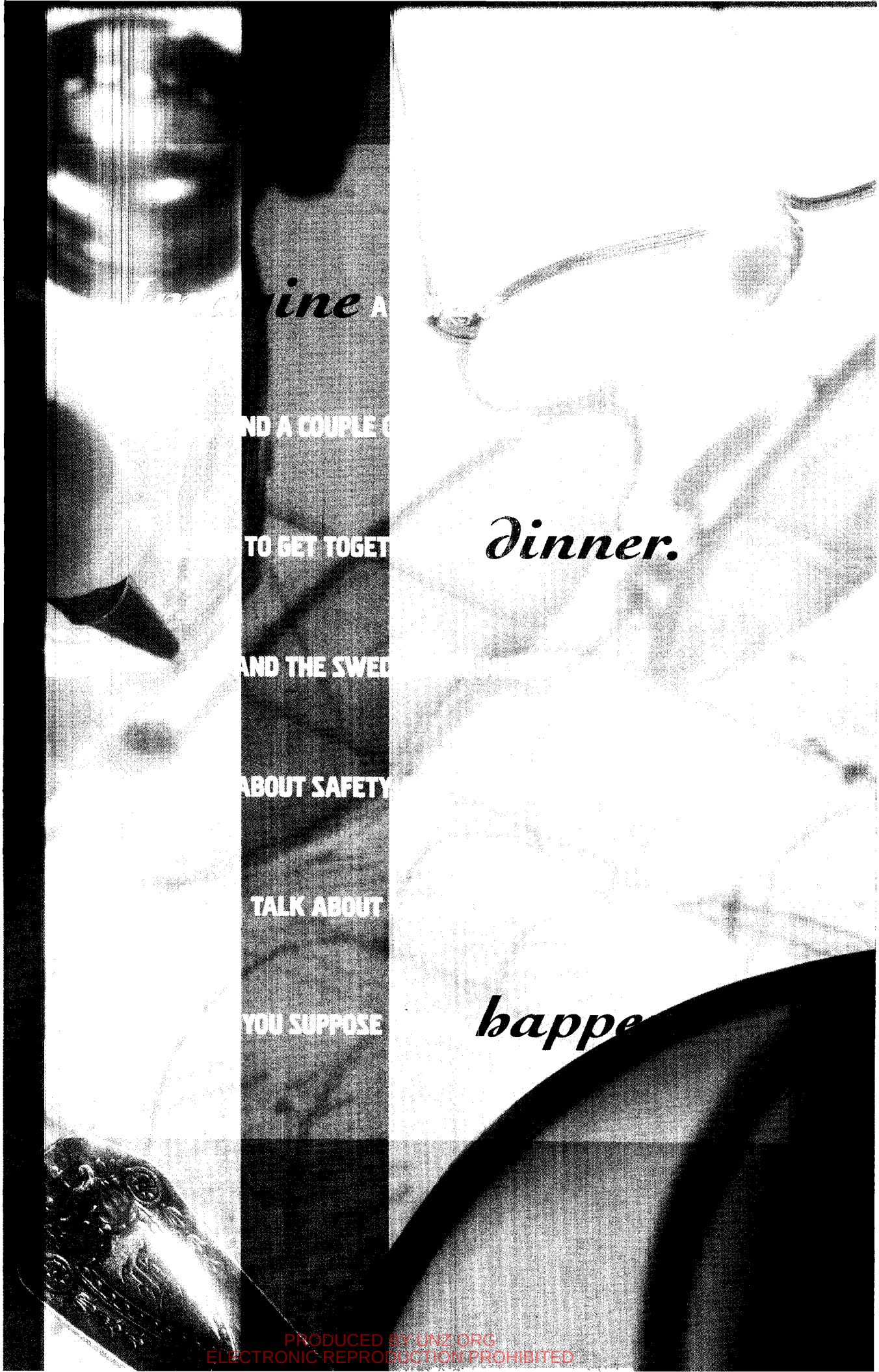

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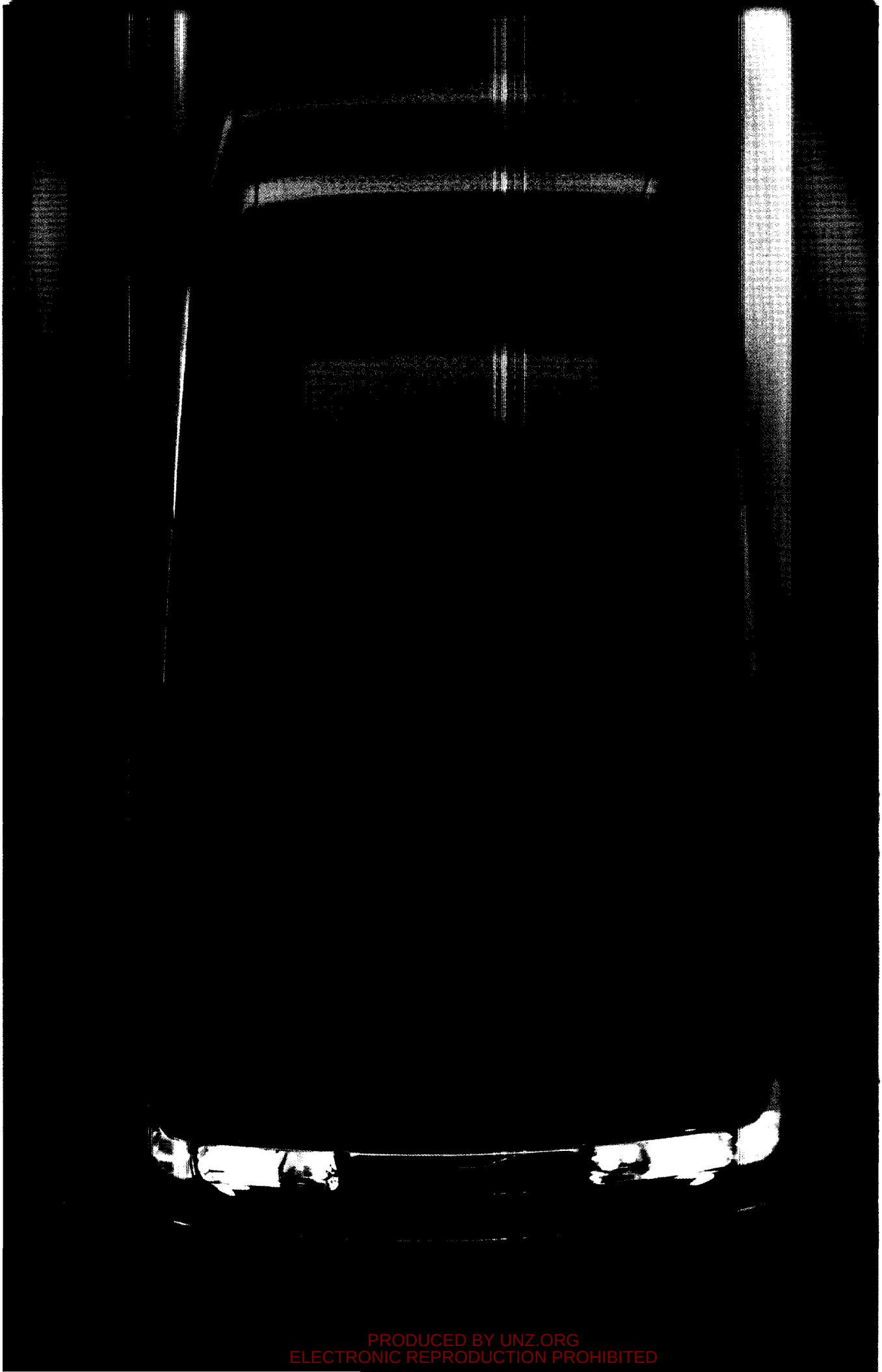

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anti-affirmative-action stand and his advocacy of various self-help strategies, also contends that citizen-based commonality can overcome differences in race and class. "Conservatives are wrong to simply incant the 'personal responsibility' mantra, if they are not also prepared to help people who so desperately need to be helped," Loury has written.

> "Those people" languishing in the drug infested, economically depressed, crime ridden central cities—those people are *our* people. We must be in relationship with them. The point here transcends politics and policy. The necessity of being engaged with the least among us is a moral necessity. We Americans cannot live up to our self-image as a "city on a hill," a beacon of freedom and hope for all the world, if we fail this test.

Arguing for a position somewhere between West's and Loury's, Stephen Carter inveighs against the racial essentialism found in the forms of affirmative action that use race as a proxy for disadvantage—a policy that implies that to be black is automatically to be underprivileged. A product of Stanford University and Yale Law School, who clerked for Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, Carter teaches law at Yale, where he specializes in constitutional law and the relationship between politics and society. His most recent book is *The Confirmation Mess*, a critical study of the confirmation process for judgeships and other offices.

His popular and controversial first book, *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby*, spelled out Carter's doubts about the role of affirmative action in determining African-Americans' place in American society. In it he objected to affirmative-action policies that use skin color as a clumsy shorthand for specific social and economic characteristics, so that even universities that recruit primarily middle-class and well-off blacks can claim they are helping African-Americans in general—a practice for which Carter puts the blame on a society that wants its "racial justice cheap." In this book—a memoirlike declaration of independence from the black intellectual status quo in the tradition of Podhoretz's *Making It*—Carter offered a vision of racial solidarity based on common aims rather than ideological uniformity.

He continued his attack on essentialist thinking in his second book, *The Culture of Disbelief*, in which he called for a public sphere capable of admitting religious Americans with their sacred beliefs intact. In both books Carter showed how American democracy suffers when its citizens are reduced to stereotypes, whether along racial or religious lines. Striking a delicate balance between ethnic background and national identity, he compared the use of the term "African-American" to efforts made by other hyphenated ethnic groups: "It is a desire to move towards a dualism that says, I am fully American *and* I fully celebrate my heritage, something that can be mediated only by citizenship."

Far from embracing a so-called color-blind vision of society, these authors celebrate their racial particularity while simultaneously demanding that blacks be given their full rights as citizens; for them, the one need not undercut the other. This theme is especially clear in the work of Stanley Crouch. A wide-ranging cultural critic, Crouch writes about jazz, literature, and politics. He was a co-founder of Lincoln Center's jazz program and is currently finishing a novel and a biography of Charlie Parker.

The idea of American citizenship is Crouch's intellectual lodestar, as is evident throughout his award-winning collection *Notes of a Hanging Judge*, in which he frequently attests to his "deepening confidence in the imperatives of the American social contract." For Crouch, politics must involve African-Americans "not as outsiders but as voters, taxpayers, and sober thinkers." To treat blacks as if they lived apart from America, he argues, is patronizing and ultimately destructive. Crouch extends the citizenship framework even to his criticisms of pop culture: "The fact that Michael Jackson not only is a person of African descent but is also an American should never be excluded from a discussion of his behavior," he writes of the performer's penchant for perpetual self-creation. "The American dream is actually the idea that an identity can be improvised and can function socially if it doesn't intrude upon the freedom of anyone else."

This group is retrieving an intellectual tradition whose origins are in the works of Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray, and James Baldwin—an influence they acknowledge freely. Sometimes referred to as the "integrationist" tradition, its most powerful expressions—Ellison's *Invisible Man* and the essays in *Shadow and Act* and *Going to the Territory*; Murray's *The Omni-Americans*; Baldwin's *Nobody Knows My Name*—for a time fell out of favor because of the dissonant note they struck against the ascendant black nationalism of the sixties and seventies. Today, for intellectuals trying to navigate between the Scylla of feel-good racial boosterism and the Charybdis of nihilistic pessimism, this tradition provides a perspective on the black experience that is at once hopeful and sober. "The story of the Negro in America is the story of America," Baldwin wrote, though he hastened to add that the story is often not a pretty one.

For all their differences, Baldwin, Murray, and Ellison shared an unshakable belief in the essential Americanness of the African-American experience. Their tradition offers an alternative to Afrocentrists like Molefi Asante and Leonard Jeffries, who portray African-Americans as little more than unwelcomed visitors in a hostile land, and to conservatives like Shelby Steele and Thomas Sowell, who imply that blacks must prove themselves worthy of full citizenship in an idealized America.

Ellison argued in his essay "What America Would Be Like Without Blacks" that blacks, constitutive of Americanness rather than candidates for it, are the moral center of America's complex hybrid culture. They push democratic culture toward fruition, with the most obvious test being "the inclusion—*not* assimilation—of the black man." America "could not survive being deprived of their presence be-

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cause, by the irony implicit in the dynamics of American democracy, they symbolize both its most stringent testing and the possibility of its greatest human freedom," he wrote. Toni Morrison's best-selling book of essays, *Playing in the Dark*, can be read as an extended meditation on Ellison's belief in the centrality of African-Americans for American literature. "The presence of black people is inherent, along with gender and family ties, in the earliest lesson every child is taught regarding his or her distinctiveness," she writes. "Africanism is inextricable from the definition of Americanness." Ellison wrote, "Whatever else the true American is, he is also somehow black."

Baldwin, too, highlighted the importance of conceiving of the African-American first and foremost as a citizen: "as American as the Americans who despise him, the Americans who fear him, the Americans who love him—the Americans who became less than themselves, or rose to be greater than themselves by virtue of the fact that the challenge he represented was inescapable."

This retrieval of Baldwin, Ellison, and Murray takes place at a time when a variety of black nationalisms have become increasingly popular—a development that poses a question about the "organic" connection of these middle-class intellectuals to the wider African-American public.

BAD PEOPLE

A man told me once that all the bad people
Were needed. Maybe not all, but your fingernails
You need; they are really claws, and we know
Claws. The sharks—what about them?
They make other fish swim faster. The hard-faced men
In black coats who chase you for hours
In dreams—that's the only way to get you
To the shore. Sometimes those hard women
Who abandon you get you to say, "You."
A lazy part of us is like a tumbleweed.
It doesn't move on its own. It takes sometimes
A lot of Depression to get tumbleweeds moving.
Then they blow across three or four States.
This man told me that things work together.
Bad handwriting sometimes leads to new ideas;
And a careless God—who refuses to let you
Eat from the Tree of Knowledge—can lead
To books, and eventually to us. We write
Poems with lies in them, but they help a little.

—ROBERT BLY

Seventeen years after the sociologist William Julius Wilson argued that in the economic sphere class had become more important than race in determining black access to privilege and power, these thinkers must take into account the fact that well over a quarter of African-Americans today are, like themselves, middle-class—up from less than five percent before the civil-rights era. Their move away from racial essentialism is undoubtedly as much a response to the growth of the black middle class as it is an attempt to empower the other 75 percent or so of African-Americans, who now bear the brunt of economic hardship and racial discrimination. That a large portion of the public these intellectuals are addressing is white further complicates their attempt to create an identity for themselves that balances their various racial, political, ideological, and class allegiances.

THE WRITERS WE NEED

If black intellectuals in fact make up a new group of public intellectuals, they are nonetheless strikingly different from the public intellectuals of the past. Their sights having been trained so closely on America's peripatetic mainstream culture, their work often possesses a similarly transient feel: after all, a critic is only as substantial and profound as the subject he chooses to criticize. There is a sense in which the story of the public thinker over the past seventy-five years has been one of gradual decline, as each successive generation has found itself with less independence than the previous ones. Coming immediately after the last generation of New Yorkers, who spent their final years as academics, black intellectuals may differ more in the degree to which they have been co-opted by the mainstream than in the way they have been. What is most interesting in the comparison between black and Jewish thinkers is not so much their different origins but rather how similar their trajectories as university-bound public intellectuals have been. It might be said that black thinkers picked up the larger story of the public intellectual at the point where the New Yorkers left off.

Although black intellectuals have received an enormous amount of attention in the media, the academy, and beyond, it remains to be seen whether they will have an enduring impact on American culture at large. In a thoroughly consumerist society, where anything can be marketed, it must be asked how much of their prominence is due to the cynical exploitation of the same kind of multicultural advertising niche that gave us the "United Colors of Benetton."

Have black thinkers been so assimilated that they will find it difficult to keep from becoming mere pundits or intellectual celebrities? In securing places for themselves at the center of the elite academic world and in the mainstream media, have they forfeited their claim on the public intellectual's traditional oppositional stance? Having gained wide recognition through the disposable media of op-ed pieces and talk shows, will they leave enough substantial work behind?

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Have black thinkers compromised their legacy with "academic hucksterism and instant-expert witnessing," as Houston Baker suggests? Have they inadvertently traded principled Kulturkampf for appearances on *Nightline*? As public intellectuals gain greater access to mainstream culture, do they become more important thinkers, or only better known?

By taking race as a primary subject at the start of their careers, black intellectuals often personalized their scholarship in a way that would have made the young Jewish New Yorkers squirm. Although such a reaction might say more about the deep psychological conflicts of the New Yorkers than about the work of African-American intellectuals, it leads one to wonder whether the near-exclusive focus on race will lend their thinking the powerful moral direction one sees with West, Morrison, and Gates, or will merely mark the limits of their "expertise." In other words, will their race fixation deprive them of the very intellectual breadth that is the trademark of the public intellectual? In his *Notes of a Native Son*, Baldwin reflected on the personal nature of his work: "I have not written about being a Negro at such length because I expected that to be my only subject," he explained, "but only because it was the gate I had to unlock before I could hope to write about anything else." Perhaps a similar impulse is working itself out among black intellectuals today.

American culture is extremely fickle, alternately celebrating and neglecting its most venerable figures before finally giving them the recognition they deserve. Melville, Faulkner, Henry Adams, Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, Dewey, and Emerson all languished in the dustbins of history for many years at a time before being rediscovered and woven back into the canon—perhaps only to be forgotten again. If they endure, they do so because in their protean complexity they pose fundamental questions that speak to future generations, and also because they produced voluminous bodies of work, containing all the contradictions and lacunae that accompany lifetimes of sustained, imaginative thinking. Indeed, although the New York Intellectuals are currently enjoying something of a revival, it is not at all clear which of them will leave a lasting legacy for American arts and letters. Of the New Yorkers, ironically enough, most of the writers who almost certainly will have a place are black—Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and Richard Wright, all of whom were published in the *Partisan Review*.

If today's black intellectuals have not yet—with the exception of Toni Morrison's extraordinary novels—produced a body of work that will sustain itself through the Darwinian selection process of American culture, there is no reason to believe that they won't. They are relatively young, and a number seem to be just hitting their stride. After all, it wasn't until John Dewey (perhaps the model of the academic public intellectual) was in his sixties that he wrote *The Public and Its Problems*, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, and *Experience and Nature*—his most important and most characteristically "public" books.

Of the factors that separate black and Jewish intellectuals, perhaps the most profound is their different attitudes toward what Howe once called "the American Newness"—the sense of unbounded hope and possibility which found such powerful (if critical) expression in Emerson. Of all the complex emotions one detects while reading the collected works of the New York Intellectuals, it is finally their profound gratitude that comes through most clearly: their existential indebtedness to America for sparing them the hardship that their immigrant parents and grandparents suffered, and for offering them the quintessential American gift—the possibility of self-transformation.

In this respect the New Yorkers drew more on their immigrant roots than their Jewish ones, and as immigrants they looked upon the new country as being somehow *theirs*, a blank canvas on which to paint their vision of the future. After the war, when the New Yorkers rediscovered their Jewish heritage, they retrieved a religious tradition that was intertwined with the immigrant optimism and determination of their youth—an ethic that many American Jews still consider an essential part of their collective identity.

For African-Americans—from their origins in slavery to the final stage of their legal emancipation, barely thirty years ago—"the American Newness" has something of a hollow ring. In their history the figure of the grateful immigrant is not to be found. "I am not a ward of America," Baldwin wrote in *The Fire Next Time*. "I am one of the first Americans to arrive on these shores." Apart from dedicated Afrocentrists, most black intellectuals think of themselves as quintessential American hybrids, or even "Negroes," to use the word preferred by Ellison and Crouch. That the experience of African-Americans has too often been judged by the standards of the romanticized immigrant narrative has caused much pain and conflict between blacks and Jews. If racial rhetoric shifted to a more citizen-oriented model, maybe some of these misunderstandings could be avoided.

Perhaps the style of black public intellectuals can best be appreciated in light of the distinction Daniel Bell once drew between the scholar and the intellectual. The scholar, he wrote, finds his place in an established tradition, adding to it piece by piece as one might to an elaborate mosaic. In contrast, the intellectual "begins with *his* experience, *his* individual perceptions of the world, *his* privileges and deprivations, and judges the world by these sensibilities"—and in so doing uses himself as a litmus test for the way society regards its citizens.

If African-Americans are "the canaries in the coal mine," as Gates believes, it may in fact be the responsibility of black public intellectuals to err on the side of the personal. Although they may not be the public figures that those who still pine for the halcyon days of the *Partisan Review* want, at a time when W.E.B. Du Bois's "color line" is still the greatest challenge to American democracy perhaps they are the ones we need.

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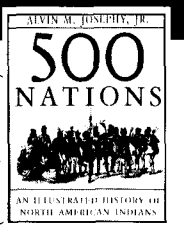

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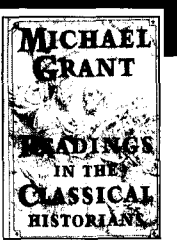

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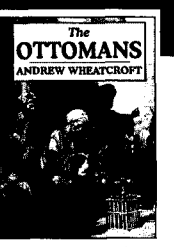

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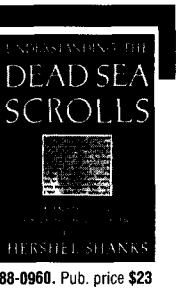

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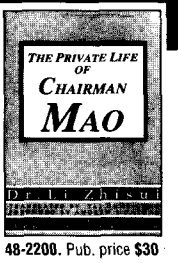

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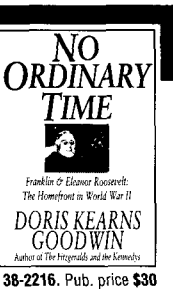

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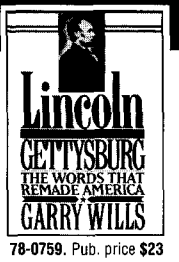

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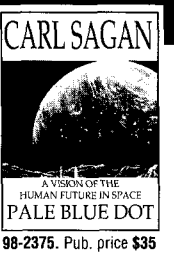

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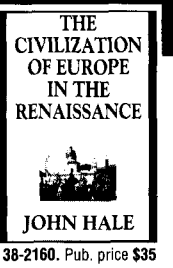

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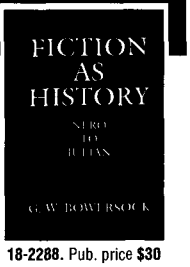

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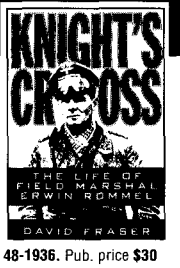

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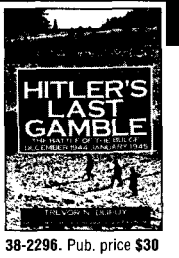

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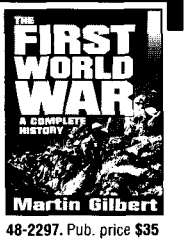

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Moral Credibility and Crime

by PAUL H. ROBINSON

Moral authority, rather than rehabilitation or deterrence, may be the key ingredient in a criminal-justice system that can reduce violent crime. That authority has been deeply eroded by the system's own rules and procedures, the author contends, and he offers ten major cases in point

We are in a panic over crime. Legislators compete with one another to propose the toughest anti-crime legislation. The $30 billion federal anti-crime bill got strong support in the midst of a deficit-reduction drive. In the states "three strikes and you're out" proposals are trumped by "two strikes" proposals.

Clearheaded commentators point out that the panic is unjustified: crime rates have not in fact increased recently, they correctly note. But a complete description of our situation includes two other important pieces of information. First, one reason that crime has not increased recently is that we have altered the way we live in order to avoid it. We no longer go out at night. We no longer let our children walk to a friend's house to play. We install locks, carry Mace, and readily pay more for apartment buildings with security. In 1980 private expenditures on security were $20 billion—considerably more than the $14 billion of public spending in the same category. By 1990 annual private expenditures for security had risen to $52 billion. The rate of crime has stabilized because we increasingly diminish the quality of our lives to avoid it. The injury of crime escalates even where its incidence does not.

The other important fact is that crime *has* dramatically increased over the longer term, albeit in increments sufficiently small that no single reported increase has justified panic. In 1955 forty-six robberies occurred annually per 100,000 in the population; today the rate is more than 270—a sixfold increase. Rape rates have more than tripled. Murder per capita has more than doubled. The aggravated-assault rate has increased more than sixfold. Overall, taking into account both urban and rural areas, the major-crime rate is more than four times what it was four decades ago.

Perhaps the current panic is born not of new data but of realized frustration—reminding us of the monkey who works methodically to free himself from a trap and goes berserk only when he realizes he can't escape. Frustration, not crime, has boiled over.

To many, our situation is intolerable. Five years ago, before the current panic, 82 percent of those polled in one study believed that crime was getting worse; 34 percent felt "truly desperate" about rising crime.

What We Have Tried

The steady worsening of the crime problem is not the result of inattention; rather, it has occurred despite our best efforts to halt it. In the 1950s we thought we could best stop crime by not just imprisoning criminals but rehabilitating them. Today we would call it attacking the root cause of the problem: offenders have a

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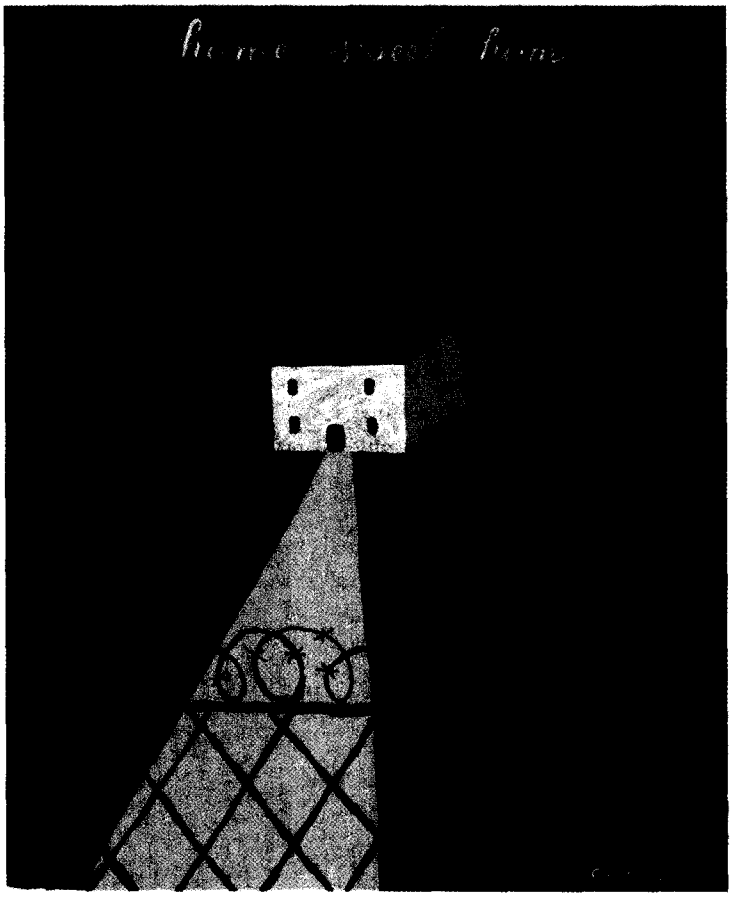
disease; we will treat it. The logic of the rehabilitative model dictated that sentences for all felonies be indeterminate—from one day to life, depending on the treatment needed and how the offender responded. But Robert Martinson, a sociologist, concluded in his 1974 survey article "What Works?," in *The Public Interest,* "I am bound to say that these data, involving over two hundred studies and hundreds of thousands of individuals as they do, are the best available and give us very little reason to hope that we have in fact found a sure way of reducing recidivism through rehabilitation."



Deterrence became popular as an alternative. Potential offenders would be dissuaded from committing offenses by the threat of serious penalties. The greater the threatened penalty (the longer the prison term), the greater the disincentive. The high cost of imprisonment would normally put a natural limit on the severity of the deterrent threat, but the threat could be made dramatic without courting fiscal crisis if longer sentences than would actually be served were publicly imposed. The idea was that the deterrent benefit would be fully realized at the moment of public imposition, and that offenders could later be quietly released by parole boards (conveniently left over from the rehabilitation approach). Typical was the federal system, in which offenders could be eligible for release immediately, and which generally required release after serving a third of the sentence.

But in our open society the shell game was soon seen for what it was. The public came to understand that a twenty-year sentence really meant a maximum of seven years and often much less. To counteract this discounting of sentences, judges imposed ever greater sentences, sometimes of hundreds of years. But this only increased public skepticism, because the potential discount also increased; even a sentence many times as long as the human life-span could end in release after a few years if the parole board so chose. Many states are following the lead of the federal system, which recently shifted to "real-time" sentencing, under which offenders must serve at least 85 percent of the term imposed. With time, sentencing will regain credibility.

But does imprisonment deter crime? Deterrence requires that potential offenders think about the consequences of their actions, as many fail to do. More important, deterrence requires that those who do think about the consequences see some real risk that they will be caught and punished—a risk that must outweigh the benefits they expect from the crime. Unfortunately for deterrence, potential offenders think that the threat of capture and punishment applies to others but not to them. Unlike the other guy, *they* will avoid detection by taking the necessary precautions. Thus even those who might think about the consequences of their actions do not think that the threat of punishment applies to them.

But even if most offenders thought the threat did apply to them, what would be the nature of the threat they faced? An astounding number of serious offenses are never reported to the police (for example, 21 percent of rapes and 40 percent of burglaries), out of embarrassment, out of fear of reprisal, or in the belief that the police are impotent to do anything. For the offenses reported, clearance rates (the rates at which the police identify and arrest suspects) have been dropping steadily for decades. The nationwide clearance rate for homicide, which was 93 percent in 1955, has steadily declined to 67 percent. That for rape has declined from 79 to 52 percent, and that for burglary from 32 to 14 percent.

And, as our realistic potential offender knows, being arrested is a far cry from being punished. The overall conviction rate among those arrested for the most serious offenses is 30 percent. Fewer than half of those convicted of a felony are sentenced to prison. Finally, the median time served by those actually sentenced to state prison ranges from 5.5 years for murder to 2.2 years for kidnapping to 1.4 years for arson.

The cumulative effect of the many escape hatches from punishment leaves a deterrent threat that looks like this: Homicide offers a less than 45 percent chance of being caught, convicted, and imprisoned, rape a 12 percent chance, robbery a four percent chance. Assault,

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burglary, larceny, and motor-vehicle theft are each a hundred-to-one shot. Our potential offender may not be cowed by these threats. These statistics also explain why longer prison terms can have only a limited effect in deterring crime: if a robber faces a mere four percent chance of going to prison, why should it matter to him whether the likely sentence is two years or ten years?

Our fallback crime-control policy has increasingly been to keep in prison those offenders we think may commit another crime. We know this works (at least to protect the public—victimization of other prisoners is another matter). Unfortunately, we are no better at predicting future dangerousness than we are at rehabilitating. In a monograph published by the National Institute of Mental Health, John Monahan, a psychologist, summarizes studies indicating that we are wrong about two out of every three people predicted to commit a serious offense. In other words, as many as two thirds of the prisoners detained for dangerousness are detained needlessly. Besides its obvious unfairness, this approach makes the incapacitation strategy wildly expensive. And even at its best, the value of incapacitating dangerous offenders is limited to avoiding further offenses while the person is in prison. It does nothing to avoid offenses after imprisonment.

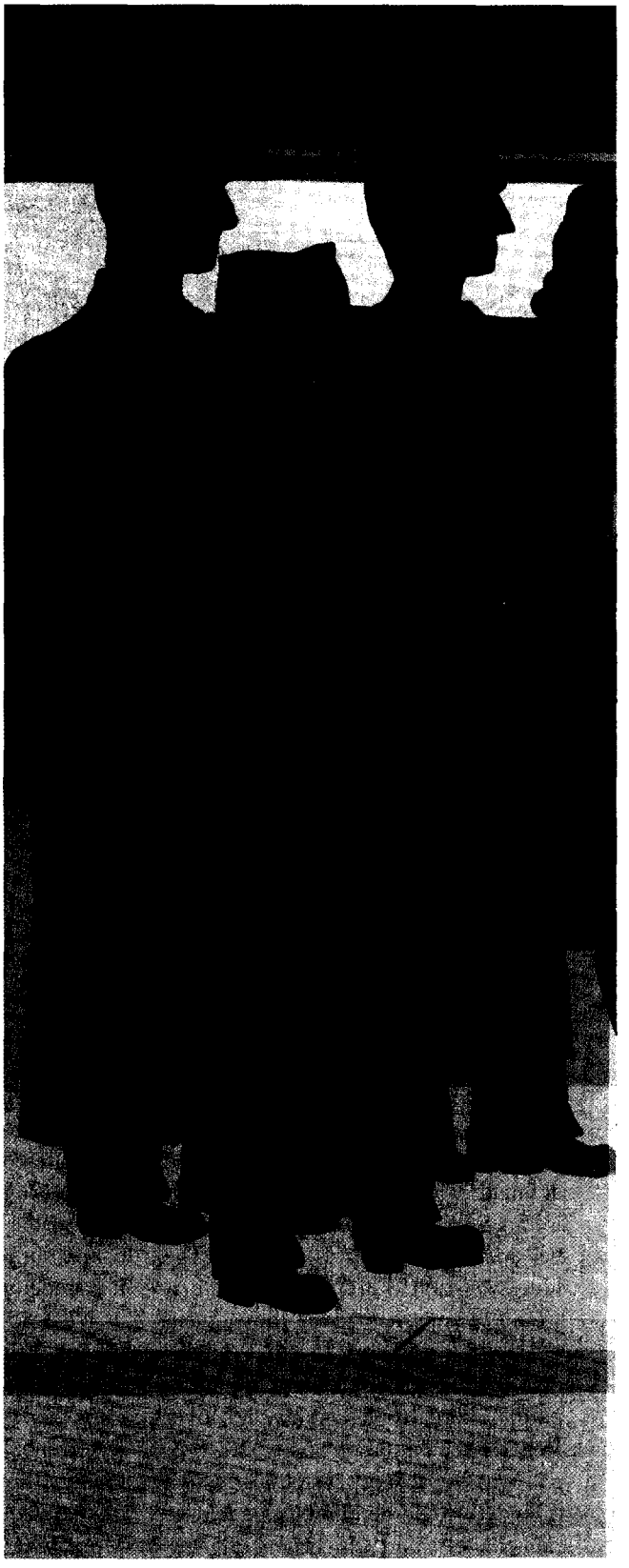
This is a truly depressing picture. Is this the future of mankind: ever increasing numbers of people in prison? Can't we do something to prevent people from committing crimes in the first place?

Moral Credibility as Crime Control

We tend to think of criminals as a distinct class of people. This image is reinforced by reports that one group of offenders is responsible for a disproportionately large share of crimes. If we could only do something with these criminal types in our society, the logic goes, we could solve our crime problem. And then the standard punishment-versus-prevention debate is off and running: should we keep more of these folks in prison, or should we target this group for more social services, or should we strike some balance between the two?

Some offenders truly are career criminals. But the greater truth is that no offenders, except for a small group of the mentally ill, are irrevocably driven to crime. For nearly any criminal, whatever the person's age, race, social background, or economic status, one can identify hundreds of thousands of people with essentially the same characteristics who have chosen to act differently and to remain law-abiding.

People who commit crimes are people like us who have chosen to do bad things. The study *Ordinary People and Extraordinary Evil* (1993), by the sociologist Fred Katz, shows how ordinary people in the course of everyday choices can come step by step to undertake serious wrongdoing—even horrendous acts like those of the Nazi Holocaust and the My Lai massacre.



Asking "How should we deal with our criminal class?" distracts us from the positive inquiry "Why do people obey the law?" Why, even in difficult situations of need and temptation, and even when they are unlikely to be caught and punished, do the vast majority of people remain law-abiding? Perhaps if we better understood what makes a person choose not to commit a crime, even when temptation and opportunity present themselves, we could develop and enlarge that influence.

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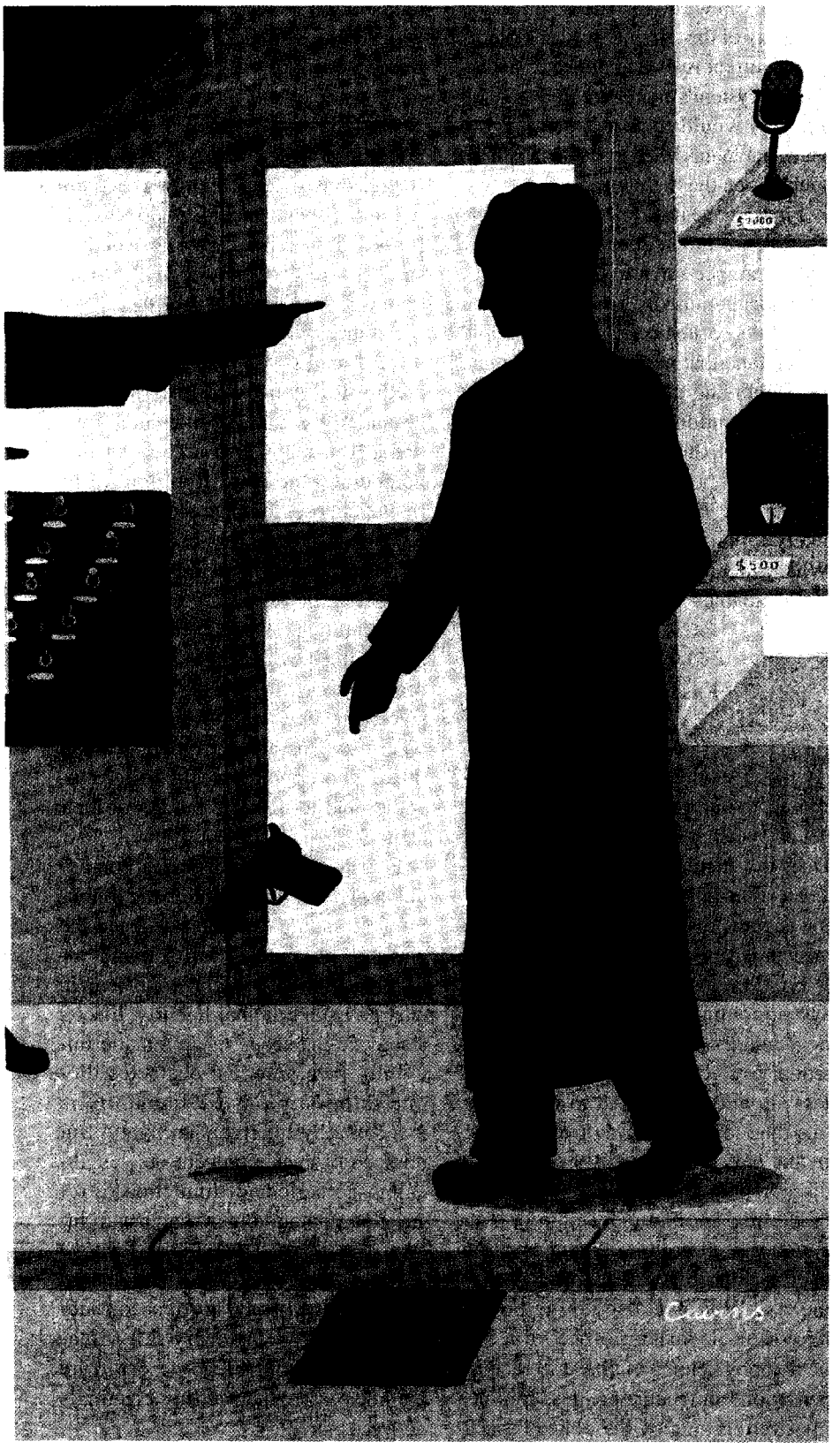

Here is what preliminary social-science research hints at: beyond the threat of legal punishment, people obey the law because they fear the disapproval of their social group and because they generally see themselves as moral beings who want to do the right thing as they perceive it. In a 1980 study the sociologists Harold Grasmick and Donald Green concluded, "Each of the three independent variables [threat of legal punishment, social disapproval, and personal moral commitment] makes a significant, independent contribution to the explained variance [the rate of criminal behavior]."

As to social disapproval specifically, the sociologists Robert Meier and Weldon Johnson found in a 1977 study that "despite contemporary predisposition toward the importance of legal sanctions, our findings are . . . consistent with the accumulated literature concerning the primacy of interpersonal influence [that is, social disapproval]" over legal sanction.

As to moral commitment specifically, the social psychologist Tom Tyler concluded in *Why People Obey the Law* (1990) that "the most important incremental contribution is made by personal morality."

> This high level of normative commitment to obeying the law offers an important basis for the effective exercise of authority by legal officials. People clearly have a strong predisposition toward following the law. If authorities can tap into such feelings, their decisions will be more widely followed.

Can legal authorities tap into these powerful forces for compliance? If they can, the potential benefits are enormous. First, as the studies quoted above suggest, both the fear of social disapproval by one's group and one's own moral commitment have strong effects on compliance—stronger than the present deterrent threat of legal punishment.

Second, unlike the threat of legal punishment, these sources of compliance do not require the likelihood of being arrested, convicted, and imprisoned to be high. A person's family or friends may suspect that he is committing crimes even if the authorities do not, or cannot prove it. In any case, *the person* always knows about his crimes. Thus reinforcing the compliance powers of the social group and personal morality could reduce crime even if policing and prosecuting functions cannot be made more effective.

Finally, neither of these sources of compliance is as staggeringly expensive as large-scale incarceration is. Nor

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do they require the increased intrusions on privacy that more-effective crime investigation would require, or the increased errors in adjudication that easier rules of prosecution might cause. In other words, they offer the best of both worlds—significantly better compliance at lower cost.

But one key condition must exist if personal moral commitment and the power of social disapproval are to be harnessed: criminal law must be seen by the potential offender and by the potential offender's social group as an authoritative source of what is moral, of what is right—much as, within a functional family, a parent may be seen as such an authoritative source. More specifically, the social-science studies suggest, the extent of the law's power to gain compliance depends upon the extent of the law's moral credibility.

By "moral credibility" and "moral authority" I mean criminal law's reputation for punishing those who deserve it, under rules perceived as just; protecting from punishment those who do not deserve it; and where punishment is deserved, imposing the amount deserved—no more and no less. I do not underestimate how complex a matter it is to determine liability rules that will be perceived as just. But, as John Darley and I show in our new book, *Justice, Liability, and Blame: Community Views and the Criminal Law*, shared community intuitions on morally just principles of punishment can be determined and articulated.

I would argue that people in our present society do not see the criminal-justice system as having a moral authority even loosely comparable to that which operates within, say, a typical functional family, or within a voluntary association. The criminal-justice system has been shaped over the years by forces that have little to do with moral desert or, sometimes, common sense, and everything to do with legal abstractions, procedural expediency, and the criminological theory of the day. The result is a system in which the dynamic of moral authority that works in successful families and small groups is sadly lacking.

What can we do to increase the moral authority of the criminal-justice system? What current rules and practices undercut the system's moral credibility? Full answers would require a detailed review, but in this brief space I can at least touch upon the highlights.

First a caveat. Some failures of the system are inevitable. Less-than-perfect clearance rates by the police, for example, admittedly limit the system's ability to do justice. But most people understand that not every offender can be caught and punished, that policing and prosecution have practical limits. Failures of the system due to these limits may be frustrating in the individual case, but over time they are not likely to hurt the system's credibility. What can hurt is failures of justice that are avoidable.

Avoidable Failures of Justice

DOES the system regularly fail to impose deserved punishment when it has the power to do so? Does it sometimes appear to have *chosen* a course that frustrates justice? Let me suggest five instances in which the answer is yes.

First, the American criminal-justice system routinely excludes reliable evidence under what is called the exclusionary rule. This suggests a system less strongly committed to doing justice than to discouraging overreaching by the police. But one may ask, If that discouraging hurts the system's moral credibility and therefore its power to encourage compliance, can't police overreaching be discouraged by other means? Why not discourage police misconduct by making officers directly liable or by helping victims to get compensation from municipalities? If limiting overreaching by the police is such an important goal, why not attack it head-on rather than "punishing" the offending officers by letting the criminal go free—which punishes society rather than the officers?

Plea bargaining is a second practice seen by many as illustrating the system's moral poverty: an offender who gets a "bargain" does not get justice. Some plea bargains reflect genuine disputes over the facts, but in many cases—the vast majority in some jurisdictions—plea bargains are struck for reasons of expediency. If we are willing to spend an additional $30 billion to fight crime, why not spend a small portion of the money to fight crime by doing justice?

Arbitrary limits on police power are a third reason why the system lacks credibility. Police power is properly limited in the name of individual freedoms. But many will argue that in a democracy the majority ought to be free to choose, for example, less privacy in exchange for less crime. If a majority of residents in a public-housing project want periodic gun sweeps of their building, should their preference be frustrated by the courts? Why not at least allow those who prefer gun sweeps to live together in a building where sweeps are permitted, leaving those who oppose sweeps to live together and to bear the burden of their choice?

Fourth, the law recognizes non-exculpatory defenses. Diplomatic immunity, the statute of limitations, and the entrapment defense, for example, allow blameworthy offenders to remain exempt from criminal liability. Efforts to reduce the scope of diplomatic immunity face practical obstacles. For one thing, diplomatic immunity is mandated by international treaty. But no such obstacles prevent our lengthening the periods of limitation or restricting the entrapment defense to instances of duress (for which a separate defense already exists) or to instances of unconstitutional police conduct (which, like exclusionary-rule violations, might better be deterred by methods other than letting criminals go free).

One more feature of the system which undermines its moral credibility is sentences that are perceived as soft or as no punishment at all—probation, for example. When properly and selectively applied, non-incarcerative sanctions can be a source of real punish-

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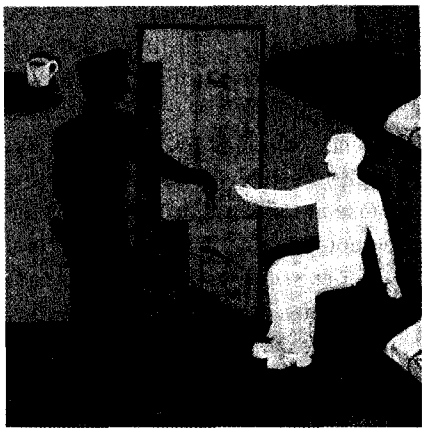
ment that costs much less than prison. But to many reformers, the intermediate-sanctions movement, as it is called, is just another opportunity to avoid imposing earned punishment. If non-incarcerative sanctions are to succeed, the total punitive bite of the sanctions—as the community perceives it—must match the amount of punishment the offender deserves.

Avoidable Injustice

BUT doing justice is only half of earning moral authority. As important, if not more so, is that the system does not do injustice. Does the system sometimes seem to have chosen to permit injustice? Here are five instances.

First, American jurisdictions have increasingly defined as criminal actions that do not require proof of a defendant's culpable state of mind. Criminal liability can be imposed for an honest and reasonable mistake or an unavoidable accident. A person can be criminally liable for killing migratory birds even if the person has done everything possible to prevent their death. One can be criminally liable for statutory rape even if any reasonable person would similarly have thought the partner was of legal age. In the same spirit, almost no American jurisdiction recognizes as a defense one's reasonable mistake in understanding the law. Liability without culpability may ease the burden for prosecutors, but it also dilutes the moral significance of a successful prosecution. Every criminal conviction without a showing of blameworthiness increases the likelihood that subsequent criminal convictions will fail to inspire moral condemnation.

Second, and similarly, some states have abolished their insanity defense, others are moving in that direction, and still others have achieved de facto abolition by allowing a verdict of "guilty but mentally ill," which encourages juries to convict even when an offender is insane. Abolition of the insanity defense is touted as necessary to keep dangerous mentally ill people



Does the justice system regularly fail to impose deserved punishment when it has the power to do so? Does it sometimes appear to have chosen a course that frustrates justice?

incarcerated, given the limitations imposed by courts upon their civil commitment. But if limitations on civil commitment are the problem, those limitations ought to be attacked directly. Abolition is also fueled by high-profile insanity acquittals in controversial cases—for example, the acquittal of John Hinckley for the attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan. But such acquittals could be avoided simply by narrowing the scope of the defense or by shifting the burden of proof. Instead of giving the prosecution the burden of proving sanity beyond a reasonable doubt, as it had in the Hinckley case, the defendant could be given the burden of proving insanity by a preponderance of the evidence. The number of insane offenders is too small for abolition of the defense to lead to large-scale injustice, but the effect of the abolition trend is to create the impression that the system does not care whether an offender is blameworthy or not.

Third, criminal law is increasingly used against purely regulatory offenses, such as those involving the activities permitted in public parks, the maintenance procedures at warehouses, and the foodstuffs that may be imported into a state. The move is understandable: reformers seek to enlist the moral force implicit in criminal conviction for the sake of deterrence—a force that civil liability does not carry. But the use of criminal conviction in the absence of serious criminal harm that deserves moral condemnation weakens that very force. As the label "criminal" is increasingly applied to minor violations of a merely civil nature, criminal liability will increasingly become indistinct from civil and will lose its particular stigma.

A similar effect occurs when purely legal entities are criminally "convicted." Legal fictions like corporations cannot make immoral choices; only the human beings within them can. To criminally convict a legal fiction is to undercut the claim that criminal conviction ought to bring moral condemnation.

A fourth source of damage to the system's moral credibility is the current state of correctional facilities. When made a prisoner, a person is stripped of the ability to defend himself and to avoid places and situations of danger. Prison authorities take complete control and, with it, responsibility for protection. Given this responsibility, and given the considerable authority granted to officials to meet it, a single assault on a prisoner by another prisoner is objectionable. Currently more than 15,000 prisoners are assaulted each year in our prisons.

The criminologist Robert Johnson, in *Hard Time* (1987), wrote, "From the mid-60's to the present, a new

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prison type has emerged. It is defined by the climate of violence and predation on the part of the prisoners that often marks its yards and other public areas." The trend is borne out by statistics. In California in 1973, for example, 289 assaults on inmates were reported. By 1983 the prison population had approximately doubled, and the number of assaults had nearly quintupled, to 1,438. In Texas in 1973 there were 130 prison assaults. In 1982 the prison population was a bit more than twice as large, and the number had grown to 887—a tripling of the assault rate in less than ten years. The next year in Texas 3,411 assaults were reported: one in ten prisoners in Texas was the victim of an officially reported assault. Imagine the daily fear that these statistics suggest. Imagine those prisoners' views of the system's moral authority.

One final damaging practice, and one of the most pervasive, is a point touched on earlier—setting punishment according to the perceived dangerousness of an offender rather than according to the offender's deserts. Under the assumption that a prior offense proves long-term dangerousness, prior offenses are widely used to increase the term of imprisonment under so-called recidivist statutes, including the "three strikes and you're out" rules of current reforms. The same rationale is used by parole boards in setting release policy and by sentencing commissions in setting guidelines. The United States Supreme Court has approved such practices as constitutional. In *Rummel* v. *Estelle*, for example, it approved a life term for a third fraud conviction, for passing a bad check for $120.75 (the two previous offenses involved an $80 credit-card fraud and a forged check for $28.36).

Even assuming that past offenses are a good predictor of future dangerousness, one simply cannot deserve punishment for an offense not yet committed—for an act that others only think will be done. This is why the law requires, for example, that a person must perform some act before he or she can be held liable for even an offense like attempt. Thinking about committing a crime, we have said since criminal law existed, is not enough to establish criminal liability, because moral lapse occurs only when one chooses to act upon the intention. Yet under recidivist statutes we routinely punish people for offenses they have not yet even thought of.

Certainly society must be able to protect itself from dangerous people, but to criminally commit a person because of a predicted future offense is to undercut the law's moral authority. If we feel we must incarcerate people to protect ourselves against crimes not yet committed, civil rather than criminal commitment ought to be used, just as we civilly commit the mentally ill and persons with contagious diseases when they pose a threat. Civil commitment has requirements that criminal commitment does not. First, because commitment is based on present dangerousness rather than a past offense, periodic reviews test for continuing dangerousness. Second, because commitment is for our protection rather than for deserved punishment, its conditions are nonpunitive in nature. The detainee's liberty is restricted only to the extent required for our protection.

Last year a *New York Times* op-ed piece criticized a jury's death verdict that jurors justified on the grounds that a life sentence would have allowed for the possibility of release. The writer was much offended that the jury could return a death verdict without concluding that the offender actually deserved the death penalty. But the logic of the verdict is entirely consistent with the increasingly common practice of American criminal justice. If we are offended because the death penalty is imposed on the basis of dangerousness rather than deserts, then we ought also to be offended by the hundreds of cases resolved each day in which prison terms are set according to dangerousness rather than deserts. Indeed, the argument against basing sentences on dangerousness is stronger with regard to imprisonment. Incarceration under civil commitment provides society with protection identical to that available through criminal commitment, whereas the death penalty provides a level of protection that civil law cannot match.

WE have lost much ground in the past forty years in fighting crime. Ironically, that same period has been one of significant efforts to revolutionize the fight against crime. Our recent insights into the law's moral authority as a force for compliance may help explain our past failures. By setting sentences that would best rehabilitate offenders or would best deter other potential offenders or would best incapacitate dangerous offenders, each of our past programs distributed punishment in a way that could be seriously disproportionate to an offender's blameworthiness. The cumulative effect of these policies has been to divert the criminal-justice system from doing justice, and public perception of that shift has undercut the system's moral authority. Our past crime-control reforms may well have increased rather than decreased crime.

The research is incomplete. We do not yet fully understand the interaction between the system's moral credibility and crime. How much decrease in credibility causes how much increase in crime? Is the relationship a continuous one, or can we find credibility trigger points below which crime increases dramatically? Will research confirm my speculations about the practices that most undercut the system's moral authority?

We do know that human beings share a desire for justice, and giving it to them seems to carry little risk. If further research supports the conclusions of the preliminary studies, the search for effective crime control as well as for justice will demand that we re-examine every practice that contributes to the moral poverty of the American criminal-justice system.

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People and nature can live in harmony, according to John Sawhill, President of The Nature Conservancy. For instance, bison at the Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in Oklahoma share miles of pristine grassland with tourists and scientists. To protect and preserve the land, The Nature Conservancy gets corporations, landowners and private citizens to work together to help. The goal: safeguarding the environment without destroying jobs or businesses. That's a goal General Motors shares. So we're supplying funds, talent and even the GMC Trucks used to maintain Tallgrass. John says, "The Conservancy gets results you can walk around on." And the results are truly spectacular.

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RIGHTER THAN NEWT

by DAVID FRUM

Phil Gramm is the most conservative Republican on the national scene. He is running for President. His candidacy will test just how audacious his adventuresome party really is

THE political career of Senator Phil Gramm requires that we rethink everything we believe we know about American politics. We believe we know that television demands politicians whose hair is shiny, whose voices are mellifluous, and who exude cheerful humility. We believe we know that Americans abhor extremes and mistrust ideology. We believe we know that government programs are ineradicable and that costly middle-class entitlements are hugely popular. We believe we know all these things. Gramm believes we're wrong.

Gramm's hair does not shine, and his Georgia accent is as thick as gumbo. He is neither cheerful nor humble. He makes fewer political compromises than almost anyone else in public life. He wants to abolish affirmative action, write a balanced-budget amendment to the federal Constitution, slash taxes, and eliminate roughly a third of the domestic budget, with the biggest cuts coming from programs intended for low-income people. And he is utterly convinced that what he wants, America wants. In sum, Gramm is inviting Republicans to wager the 1996 presidential election on a

Illustration by Barry Blitt

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PRESIDENT GRAMM WOULD ATTEMPT TO ENAC

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

January, 1983: Gramm becomes a Republican

breathtaking gamble: that the voters are at last ready to repudiate liberalism completely.

Gramm's invitation is of more than merely speculative interest. He is an all-but-declared candidate for the Republican nomination (formal announcement date: February 24). With some $5 million in the bank already, and with the names of 88,000 proven donors in his computers, he is the best-organized, best-funded of all the Republican aspirants. And because 60 percent of all Republican delegates will be chosen in the six weeks after New Hampshire's February primary, the candidate who is best prepared in 1995 has to be considered the front-runner for 1996.

If Phil Gramm is indeed the Republican candidate (and assuming that Bill Clinton retains the Democratic nomination), then the 1996 election will present the voters with a choice between two men starkly different and yet strangely similar—two equal and opposite halves of their generation's experience. Gramm and Clinton are only four years apart in age. Both come from poor southern families, and both owe their success in life to the great postwar expansion of higher education. Both have spent virtually their entire working lives in the public sector, and both are married to high-achieving professional women. Neither has served in the armed forces—which would make 1996 the first race between two nonveterans since 1944. For both men, modern government was an accomplished fact by the time they entered politics: they are inheritors of the Great Society. But whereas Clinton, like many of the people who thought of themselves as rebels during the 1960s, accepts this inheritance with hardly any reservations, Gramm has rebelled against it. Thus there is perhaps one more thing we shall have to revise if Gramm wins his prize, and that is our conventional understanding of who the young people of the 1960s really were and what they really believed, at the time and in the years since.

Clinton may have imbibed the free and easy ways of that decade; Gramm remains as driven and self-controlled as any upwardly mobile poor boy in a Victorian novel. Asked to assess the quality of the Clinton White House staff, Gramm says, "They have a sloppy look about them." Sloppy Gramm is not, and he does not tolerate sloppiness in those around him. His shirts are always meticulously pressed, and the down-home remarks he makes in public have all been carefully weighed in advance. Unlike the President, Gramm is scrupulously punctual. In the course of his ascent President Clinton somehow absorbed some of the relaxed manners of his aristocratic heroes, the Roosevelts and the Kennedys. It's understandable that—as Clinton's pollsters discovered to their horror in 1992—many Americans assumed he was born in comfort. But nobody could ever mistake Gramm for anything but a self-made man.

A REPUTATION FOR "MEANNESS"

PERHAPS it is Gramm's thrusting qualities that most strongly mark the difference between his conservatism and that of his antecedents on the Republican right—Ronald Reagan, Barry Goldwater, and Robert Taft. Unlike Taft's, Gramm's speech is demotic. Only recently has Gramm's accent begun to thin; he still often forgets his staff's advice to refer to his "mother," not his "mamma." Unlike Goldwater, Gramm calculates political risks carefully. Shortly before the November 8 congressional election Gramm made a campaign appearance in behalf of a young Republican congressional challenger in Arizona. He listened to the young man deliver a bombastic, foolish speech and afterward took him aside for some unsweetened advice. "There are only two issues when running against an incumbent," he said. "Her record, and I'm not a kook. Forget the feel-good stuff. Say, This is her record; this is what I'm for. If a subject can't elect you to Congress, don't talk about it."

And unlike Reagan, Gramm does his homework. Reagan was a man of feeling; Gramm is a man of intellect. His mind burns at a higher wattage than that of any other senator save Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Reagan never really understood the institutions he had pledged to reform; Gramm has mastered the details of American government better than any other national Republican figure. And again unlike Reagan, Gramm is his own handler. By the time Reagan ran for President in 1980, he had been a star for more than forty-five years. He expected people to take care of him. Gramm does not. He carries his own garment bag and does his own thinking. That cruel joke about Reagan—"It's not that Reagan lacks principles; it's that he doesn't understand the ones he

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has"—does not apply to Gramm. He has thought his principles through, he recognizes that they will exact substantial human costs, and he has decided that those costs are outweighed by the potential benefits.

It is this ideological rigor, unsoftened by any of Reagan's telegenic benignity, that best accounts for Gramm's reputation for "meanness," an accusation that has been hurled not only by squishy liberals but also by conservatives. Michael Barone, the increasingly right-tilting co-author of the *Almanac of American Politics*, has written of Gramm, "There is a note of anger to him—a sharp edge of hostility toward those whose view of America is quite different. In this friendly country, angry candidates—Pat Buchanan, Jerry Brown are 1992's examples—do not wear well." In her book *Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness*, published last year, Peggy Noonan quotes an acquaintance's put-down: "'[Gramm's] best friends don't like him.'"

In fact, though, Gramm in person is anything but angry or harsh. He may lack the anemic quality we call niceness, but he's a witty and polite man. His friends do seem to like him: he and Senator John McCain, of Arizona—the gallant ex-POW—spent more than a week last October hopping about the Southwest together in a tiny aircraft, shared a case of flu, and by day eight were still swapping jokes with warmth and kindliness. Gramm's marriage has lasted twenty-five years and is, insofar as outsiders can or ought to judge, a close one; his two college-age sons seem to be well-adjusted young men. Turnover on his staff is low; Gramm is not one of those senators who shriek at their employees or ask them to perform demeaning tasks.

On the other hand, those who know the Senate point out that Gramm is not popular with his colleagues there, not even the Republicans among them. He takes few pains to disguise his pride in his ability or his awareness of his colleagues' limitations. He does not twinkle with good humor, as Reagan did. Nor does he bother to disguise his fierce pursuit of the presidency. Presidential candidates used to feign reluctance to take the job. When Franklin Delano Roosevelt flew to the 1932 Democratic Convention, in Chicago, to accept his party's nomination in person, many were startled. Until then nominees had been expected to wait at home for a delegation to arrive on their doorstep and plead with them to heed their country's call. Even today we retain vague feelings that the job should seek the man. But for more than a year Gramm has told anyone who asks—and many who have not asked—that he intends to run for President in 1996. His directness can shock more circumspect souls. Shortly after the 1994 election, according to one account I have heard, a prominent Republican who has been raising money for Jack Kemp for nearly a decade paid a call on Gramm in the company of one of Kemp's top aides to congratulate Gramm on his success as chairman of the party's senatorial campaign. After half a minute or so of pleasantries, Gramm fixed his eyes on his visitor and, looking past the Kemp aide's reddening face, bluntly got down to business: "You know and I know that Jack's nowhere in this race. There are only three candidates worth mentioning: Lamar Alexander, Bob Dole, and me. You've got to back me."

Still, ambitious politicians are not unknown in American life. The presidency didn't fall into Bill Clinton's lap either. And if Gramm lacks Reagan's ability to project good cheer through a television camera, so does Bob Dole. Neither ambition nor the whims of the mass media sufficiently explain Gramm's unflattering public image. No, if Gramm is thought to be uniquely mean, that is owing to something more substantial: his uniquely uncompromising politics.

REAGANISM IN THREE DIMENSIONS

LIBERALISM today plays much the same role in social life that Christianity played in late Victorian Britain: increasing numbers of people have come to suspect that it is not valid, even as they find themselves utterly unable to imagine any alternative source of truth. With the Sea of Faith withdrawn, Matthew Arnold groaned, this world "Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain. . . ." But Gramm refuses to cross himself at the liberal chapel. Many conservatives who attended college in the 1960s were swept up enough in those guilt-tortured years to have acquired the need to prove to their liberal friends that they are decent folks despite their repellent ideology: "I'm for cutting spending—*except for antipoverty programs*." "I'm conservative—*but I consider myself a feminist*." "I object to quotas—*but I want vigorous enforcement of the rest of the civil-rights laws*." "I think you're mistaken—*but I respect your good intentions*."

Gramm concedes nothing. "I've never had a campaign that I didn't have an opponent who was rich, and who had rich parents, telling me about poor people," he says. "I'm not going to be cowed by people who want to accuse me of being anti-poor. I'm not going to be swayed by people who say, 'You have no compassion.' I have great compassion. I think of the unwed mother who is working as a cook in a little restaurant, working ten or eleven hours a day. She is barely making ends meet. It is wrong that people who aren't working are getting more money than she is. I think she ought to get to keep more of what she earns. I don't think it's fair that because she is working, she gets no medical cover-

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age, or has difficulty getting it, and somebody who doesn't work gets the best in the world."

In Gramm's mind, what that woman needs is for government simply to leave her alone. "My view on life is very much colored by who I am, and where I grew up, and how my people succeeded. And by my wife's story. My wife's grandfather came to this country as an indentured laborer to work in the sugarcane fields. Her father was the first Asian-American ever to be an officer of a sugar company. She became chairman of the CFTC [Commodity Futures Trading Commission] under Reagan and Bush, and regulated sugarcane futures. That's America in action. Anybody who's gonna try to tell me America doesn't work—they're wasting their breath. It can't be done. I can't be convinced."

His political philosophy might be summed up as Reaganism in three dimensions, the third being depth. He does not buy the happy message of the supply-siders of the early 1980s: low enough tax rates will pump out enough revenues to obviate any big change in social programs. To be sure, Gramm wants to cut taxes. On the stump he complains, "In 1950 the average American family with two children sent one dollar out of every fifty dollars it earned to Washington, D.C. And they probably thought it was too much. Today that family is sending one dollar in every four dollars to Washington. In twenty years, if there are no new programs, . . . the figure will be one dollar out of every three dollars."

However, he scorns those who "want the benefits of limited government but not the costs." Gramm envisions a radical reconception of the functions of the federal government. He would cheerfully spend more money on defense. "If the lion and the lamb are about to lie down together in the world," he says, "it's very important that the United States of America be the lion" (a motto so pleasing to him that he has had it framed and hung on his office wall). He would build necessary physical infrastructure—although "whether every airport in America needs to be a remake of the Taj Mahal or not is an open question." Beyond that, he says, he would put the federal government on a budget. And the main targets of his budgeting would be means-tested programs: Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, food stamps, low-income energy assistance, and Aid to Families with Dependent Children. As Gramm puts it, "I'm going to ask those riding in the wagon to get out and help the rest of us pull it."

Now, Gramm is intimately familiar with the federal budget. He knows perfectly well that the bulk of federal spending is lavished on middle- and upper-income taxpayers. And his attack on Big Government would be felt across the board. He claims that when Secretary of Labor Robert Reich attacked federal business subsidies in a speech last November, he offered to sponsor a bill eliminating them. And his plan to reform public and private health insurance would have the effect of quadrupling or quintupling Medicare's present deductible of $600-plus. The idea is complicated, but essentially, health insurance and Medicare for routine expenses would be eliminated. Instead employers would contribute to special tax-advantaged savings accounts—usually known as "medical IRAs." The difference between deposits into those accounts and money actually spent on health care each year would be the saver's to roll over or pay taxes on and keep. Insurance—whether private or Medicare—would not start to pick up health costs until after the first $2,500 or $3,000 a year. Since about 80 percent of Americans spend less than $3,000 a year on health care, medical IRAs would reorient American medicine away from insurance to direct payment by patients. The advantages of patient payment are potentially vast—almost as vast as the likely shock to a middle class that by and large feels content with the health-care that it gets.

On Social Security, too, Gramm's promise that people who have contributed to the system will get their money back—and his omission of any promise of more—clearly implies that Social Security will play a much smaller role for future retirees than it plays now. Still, Gramm is no neoliberal. For all their faults, he regards Social Security and Medicare as "earned benefits," which deserve gentler treatment than means-tested welfare programs. Most of those he'd like to scrap, and use the money saved to double the per-child tax exemption to $5,000 from the present $2,450.

When challenged to justify the apparent unfairness of this discrepancy, he bristles. One set of benefits was paid for, the other wasn't. Isn't that reason enough for the difference? He angrily rejects any imputation of unfairness. "I'm trying to help people who are on welfare. I'm not hurting them. The government hurt them. The government took away from them something more important than this money. They took away their initiative, they took away a substantial measure of their freedom, they took away in many cases their morality. They corroded their morality, their drive, their pride. I want to help them get that back. . . . I want to do it because I love them, because I want them to be Americans. And their children and grandchildren will thank us."

A President Gramm would attempt to enact a comprehensive and radical free-market program, more radical than that of Newt Gingrich's House Republicans. With the stroke of a pen he would repeal the executive orders that enforce affirmative action. Environmental and other rules would be subject to a new regulation requiring Washington to compensate property owners if any federal rule reduced the value of their holdings by more than 25 percent. But the issues on which Gramm's attention is fixed are the cost of government to the ordinary worker and the dangerous allurement of welfare. "Ordinary people" figure large in his speeches. "America is not a great and powerful country because the most brilliant and talented people in the world came to live here. It's ordinary people—people who would have been peasants anywhere else—who were able to do extraordinary things." That is, Gramm insists, his own story—but if there's one thing that Phil Gramm isn't, it's an ordinary person.

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This road crew plowed the waste out of government

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It was a rough winter in Saratoga County, New York. It was bitter cold and it snowed twice as much as normal.

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THE PROFESSOR

THE future senator was born in Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1942. His mother's family name was Scroggins: Gramm knows little more about her family than that they were Scotch-Irish and that his grandmother's father and grandfather fought for the Confederacy at Shiloh. Gramm's mother had been divorced young, and she had been obliged to work for a time in a cotton mill to support her two sons by that first marriage. Her second husband, Kenneth Gramm, the senator's father, was the son of an immigrant from Germany. He joined the U.S. Army at age fifteen, served along the Mexican border during the First World War, and rose to the rank of sergeant. For many years he taught at the infantry school at Fort Benning, outside Columbus. Just before he was to have been shipped out to Europe, after D-Day, he suffered an incapacitating heart attack and stroke. He lived for the next thirteen years as an invalid. Mrs. Gramm got herself trained as a practical nurse, and earned a living caring for well-to-do patients in their homes. That could have been an embittering experience. It wasn't. His mother "would come home and tell us that basically the difference between them and us is that they worked harder," Gramm says. "We could be like them. My mother would drive by the nicest house in Columbus, Georgia, and she would say, 'You could have a house like that if you worked hard for it.'"

At first the young Gramm was not persuaded. He was an indifferent student. He relishes telling the story of how he failed the third, seventh, and ninth grades. He diffidently suggests that he may have been dyslexic, or that he may have resented his disabled father's too-determined efforts to push him along. Whatever the explanation, his ambition ignited soon after his father's death, and he graduated from high school with honors, in 1961. He was only the second person in his entire clan ever to have completed high school; his half-brother Don White had been the first.

The Army had given the Gramms some insurance money, but it proved insufficient to pay for both boys' college educations. Gramm's half-brother joined the Army; Gramm himself moved to Atlanta, held part-time jobs, studied by correspondence, married his first wife at age nineteen, and took a bachelor's degree in three years at the University of Georgia and a Ph.D. in economics in a little less than three years more. He was appointed to the faculty of Texas A&M, the University of Texas's less prestigious rival, in the fall of 1967. He had made it into the middle class.

That was a time of upheaval in America, but the turmoil did not touch Professor Gramm. He was entranced by economics—"These were powerful ideas that explained the world that I knew"—and saw that he did not know nearly enough about his discipline. "The University of Georgia did not have a very good graduate program. Everybody I was competing with knew more math, more stat, than I did. So I audited all of our Ph.D. programs, and in essence got two Ph.D.s." To this day Gramm despairs over gaps in his knowledge. "The easiest way for me to get melancholy is to walk over to the Library of Congress and look down those endless stacks of books, and realize there's information in there I need to know and am going to die not knowing."

He claims to have stayed aloof from politics in those early years, except for voting for Goldwater in 1964. As he tells it, the racial agonies of the desegregating South left scarcely a mark on him. Asked about it now, he begins by asserting that segregation was "obviously wrong." But although he attended segregated schools throughout his childhood, and although the University of Georgia "was integrated the year before I came or the year after I came" (it was the year before: January of 1961), the civil-rights struggle seems not to have galvanized him.

Neither did Vietnam. His half-brother fought in Vietnam, and so did many of Gramm's students at Texas A&M; for much of that time he himself, as a graduate student and as a married man, was exempt from service. His support for America's aims in Vietnam never wavered. "To me, Vietnam was about what Korea was about: it was about containing communism." He had only one concern about the war: "that we were losing it."

Gramm worshipped three times a week as an Episcopal acolyte. After his first marriage ended, he filled his time coaching Boys Club football, and bought a few rental properties to supplement his income. Those were his 1960s. *The Big Chill* notwithstanding, they were also the sixties of millions or tens of millions of other striving, ambitious young people.

Gramm remarried in 1970. Like Hillary Rodham Clinton, the second Mrs. Gramm came from a social position loftier than her husband's. Wendy Lee attended Wellesley and went on to complete a Ph.D. in economics at Northwestern University. It wasn't Lee's eyes or ankles that initially stirred Gramm's interest in her: it was her dissertation. He liked it so much that he invited himself to New York to sit in on her interview for a job at Texas A&M. Afterward he walked her to the door, helped her on with her coat, and said, "As a senior member of the faculty, I would be especially interested in you coming to Texas A&M." This overture, he ruefully reminisces, was not immediately successful. "She looks at me and [I can see her think] 'Yuck.' So I went back in and said to the people at the interview table, 'We're going to convince her to come to Texas A&M, and I'm going to marry her.' So anyway, she did, and I did."

As Wendy Lee Gramm's background parallels Hillary Rodham Clinton's, so would her role in her husband's Administration. Mrs. Gramm tells friends that she would downplay politics, that she would set her sights on becoming "the nation's first Rollerblading First Lady." They don't believe her. She is a woman of formidable intelligence (she's probably a better technical economist than her husband) and strong free-market views. Republican marriages formed in

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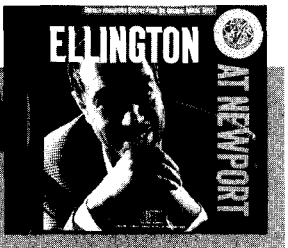

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[redacted]IS MIND BURNS AT A HIGHER WATTAGE THAN

the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s are often riven by a silent ideological divide: in the tumult of the sixties the wife went left and the husband didn't. This familiar feature of Washington social life is now coming to its natural end as the tumult retreats further and further into the past. Unlike George Bush and Ronald Reagan, Phil Gramm at home hears advice that comes from the ideological right.

Academia did not content the Gramms for long. Spurred by inflation and rising taxes, Phil Gramm decided to run for office. For some time he had been soliciting speaking engagements at eastern Texas chambers of commerce and publishing articles. (It was an op-ed piece in *The Wall Street Journal* that brought him national attention. The piece pointed out that the world had seemed in the mid-nineteenth century to be exhausting its supplies of its main lighting fuel, whale oil. Prices rose and rose—until some venturesome profit-seeker tried burning petroleum instead.) Emboldened by the applause of his chamber-of-commerce audiences, Gramm decided to challenge then-Senator Lloyd Bentsen in the Texas Democratic primary in 1976. It was a breathtaking act of bravado, a formidable gamble. Bentsen was a rich man, an effective senator, and a skilled campaigner who had dispatched George Bush in 1970. Even as a publicity stunt, running against Bentsen was risky. But the race was no stunt: at the beginning Gramm truly believed he would win. "I'd never lost at anything in my life," he says. He was crushed: he received 28 percent of the vote. He was also broke. He had put $50,000—all the money the Gramms possessed—into the campaign, and every dime of it had been spent. He decided to try again anyway, and in 1978 entered the House of Representatives as a Democrat for a district that stretched from the northern reaches of Houston to the southern suburbs of Fort Worth, and that encompassed the seat of Texas A&M, in College Station.

CHANGING PARTIES

ALMOST immediately Gramm embroiled himself in conflict with the head of the Texas Democratic delegation, Jim Wright, then the House majority leader. "Jim Wright could never understand me. He kept wondering what it was I wanted. He kept asking my Democratic colleagues from Texas, who'd come to Congress the same year I did, what was it I wanted." In Gramm's account, Wright held out the apple of temptation, explaining how conservative Democrats could be excused from certain votes if the leadership didn't need them and how they could remain free to criticize the party at home, and offering him choice committee assignments. Finally, after the Democrats' 1980 debacle, Gramm extracted from Wright the assignment he had coveted from the beginning: the Budget Committee.

Wright, who resigned in disgrace from the speakership in 1989, remembers things a little differently. In a written statement he recalls that Gramm "came to me pleading for my help [to get onto the Budget Committee]. I explained . . . that these . . . were choice plums reserved for colleagues on whom the Democratic caucus could count when the chips were down. [Gramm] promised to be [a] team player. . . . A relic of the old Texas school which values a handshake over a gilt-edged bond, I took [him] at his word."

Whether he forced or begged his way onto the Budget Committee, Gramm quickly dominated it. In his memoirs the former Reagan budget director David Stockman identifies Gramm as one of only three representatives—Jim Jones, of Oklahoma, then the chairman of the Budget Committee, and Leon Panetta, then a Democratic member of the committee, being the other two—who thoroughly understood the budget. Stockman, not an indulgent judge of others' weaknesses, unhesitatingly describes Gramm as "brilliant"; Gramm became his partner and floor leader in the House.

Gramm willingly left the pleasures of tax cutting to others and instead assumed the unpopular chore of producing matching cuts in domestic expenditures. This was another of Gramm's gambles, one certain to win him the undying enmity of the Democratic leadership. He plunged ahead regardless. With Delbert L. Latta, of Ohio, as Republican co-sponsor in the House, Gramm and Stockman outmaneuvered the leadership of the Democratic Party, beat back the alternative budget drafted by Jim Jones, and won the day for the Administration-backed Gramm-Latta budget in May of 1981.

Those were fevered days for conservatives, dramatic days. As the crucial vote neared, Gramm's bloc of conservative southern Democrats, the "Boll Weevils," came under intense pressure from the Democratic leadership to stay with the party. Jim Jones had designed a less draconian plan of his own, and many of the Boll Weevils felt tempted to heed their party leadership. In his memoirs David Stockman tells what happened next. At a meeting in the office of the most important of the Boll Weevils, Mississippi's Sonny Montgomery, "the group's chairman, Charlie Stenholm of Texas, asked the members for their opinion of [the Jim Jones alternative]."

> One by one they said it was a *reasonable compromise* and that it would allow them to work with the Democratic leadership while at the same time promoting President Reagan's goals.
>
> Gramm waited until everyone had said his piece. . . . It was clear to him, Gramm said, that if William Barrett Travis, commander of the American forces at the Alamo, had asked for a debate instead of drawing the famous line in the sand, then "there never would have been a battle."
>
> This was followed by five minutes of shouting. Jack

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Hightower of Texas pointedly reminded Gramm that everyone who crossed the line at the Alamo died. There was a murmur of assent at this.

"Yes," said Gramm, "but the ones who didn't cross the line died, too. Only no one remembers their names."

Gramm-Latta carried the day. Then, after the Senate also passed an Administration-approved budget, Gramm and Stockman crafted Gramm-Latta II, a package of spending cuts that "reconciled" the difference between revenues and spending in the budget, and dashed what remained of the Democratic leadership's hopes of rendering the Reagan Administration's program stillborn.

At first it seemed that Gramm had bought his success in 1981 at the expense of his political career. The Republicans lost twenty-six seats in the 1982 midterm elections, and House Speaker Tip O'Neill and Jim Wright seized the opportunity to take revenge on the Democratic defectors. Gramm was stripped of his Budget Committee seat. He promptly resigned from the Democratic Party and reaffiliated as a Republican. Then, although he was not obliged to, he resigned his seat and asked for a special election. It was a desperate fight, but Gramm's stock quip to his campaign audiences, "I had to choose between Tip O'Neill and y'all, and I decided to stand with y'all," achieved the desired effect: he won his seat back. The following year he ran for the Senate seat left open by the resignation of John Tower, Texas's first post-Reconstruction Republican senator, and won again.

FATE STEPS IN

In his first year as a senator, a time when tradition calls for deference to the senior members of the institution, Gramm rolled the dice again, and produced the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit-reduction amendment. In what Gramm's co-producer Warren Rudman, of New Hampshire, described as "a bad idea whose time has come," the law set a series of deficit targets and instituted mechanisms for automatic across-the-board reductions in both domestic and defense spending if those targets were not met. For conservatives, who had lost control of the House in 1982 and whose grip on the Senate was tenuous at best in 1985, Gramm-Rudman represented an appalling risk. It conceded the principle that the defense budget should be constrained by budgetary limits rather than by the Pentagon's estimation of Soviet capabilities. Worse still, it took no position at all as to whether the deficit targets would be met by raising taxes or by reducing spending. Gramm cheerfully bet the house anyway, and defends his bet to this day.

"The beauty of the Gramm-Rudman idea was that it put the fat in the fire," he says. "We could then put out the fire either by raising taxes or by cutting spending. So different people could see it producing different results. And since we had nothing like a majority on this issue, it was necessary that it be viewed as a tool, so that people would think they could do various things with the tool. I thought I could do something.

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

December, 1985: A budget deal is announced

"I didn't see it as a gamble. We were losing on defense, we were losing on taxes. No, it wasn't a gamble. At that point it was our best hope."

And to a degree it worked. Over the next five years spending growth did slow and the deficit did shrink. True, Gramm-Rudman's deficit targets were often met only by chicanery —by anticipating revenues and moving expenses off-budget—but by fiscal year 1989 the deficit had slipped to three percent of gross domestic product and the federal government's share of the economy had inched down to 22.1 percent, roughly where it had stood in 1980.

The later 1980s turned out to be fallow years for Gramm. After the loss of the Senate by the Republicans in 1986, Gramm could no longer enact legislation. His greatest accomplishment in those days was a negative one: he foresaw the danger in partly deregulating the savings-and-loan industry. In 1982 Gramm had voted against the act that freed savings-and-loans to enter nonhousing lines of business. He says, "I was always worried about this sleepy little regulator of housing lending [the Home Loan Bank Board, which oversaw thrifts] . . . suddenly regulating people who were residual earners in the fried-chicken business." As the financial condition of the S&Ls deteriorated and regulators closed in, Gramm introduced legislation to tax S&Ls to beef up the deposit-insurance fund. This prescience alienated him from the rest of the Texas delegation, because Texas was home to more troubled thrifts than any other state. And it tossed him into renewed combat with Jim Wright, the thrifts' main defender in Congress—a fact that may even have helped inspire Gramm's suspicion of the faltering industry.

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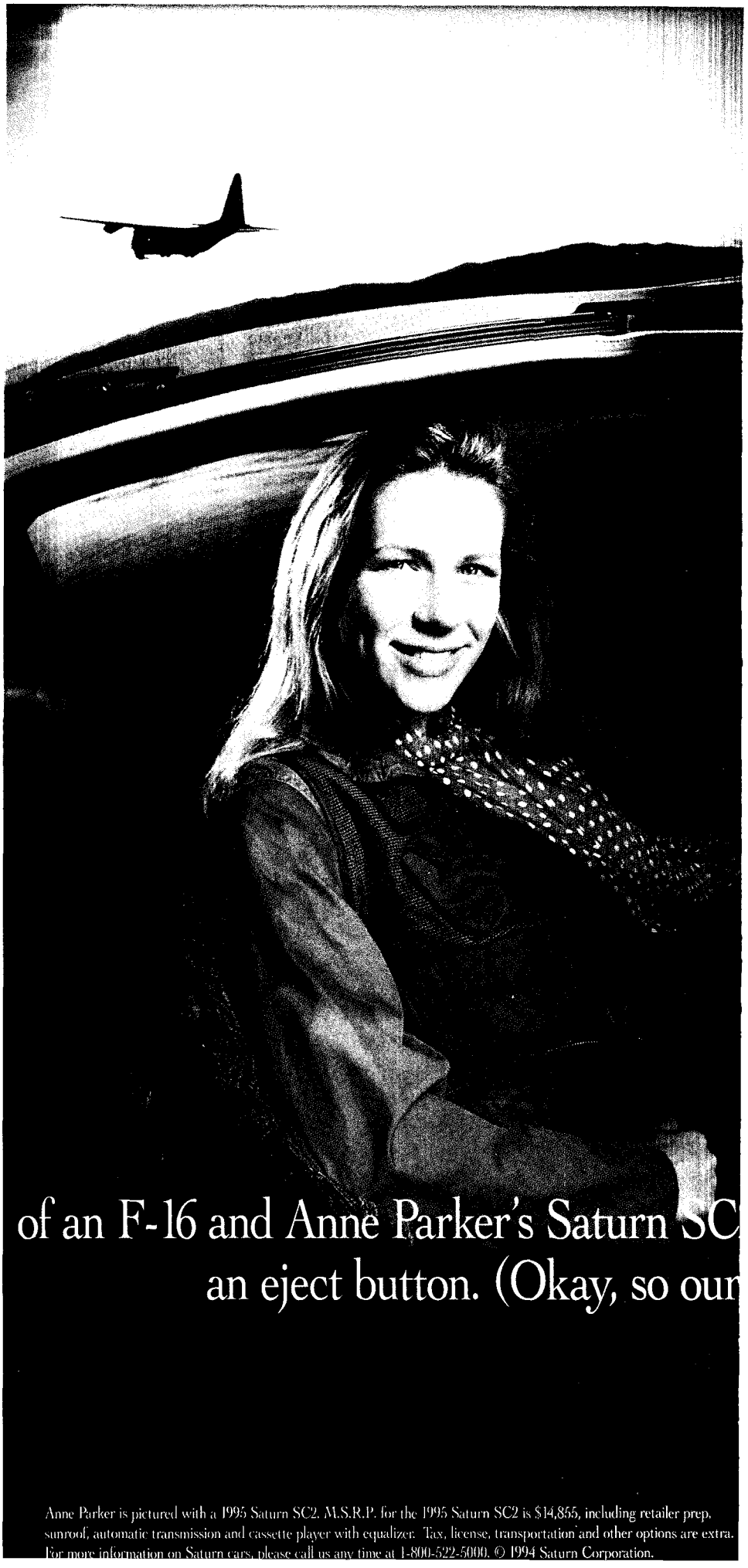
Ever since she was a little girl, Anne Parker has wanted to fly. She signed up for flight training just as soon as she could. Climbed into most everything that had wings. Then she visited one of our retailers and test-piloted a Saturn SC2.

It must have been a successful sortie, because Anne bought the coupe and she's been conducting low-level maneuvers ever since. You can't compare it to pulling 9 g's in a jet—"That would be silly," says Anne—but with its 124-horsepower, 16-valve dual-overhead-cam engine, well, it's still quite a thrill.

Especially now. See, Anne's not piloting planes anymore. A promotion has landed her behind a desk in San Antonio. A good job—air crew selection research. Then again, it's not exactly the same as throttling up at 30,000 feet.

All the more reason why she likes her Saturn. From where she sits, the gauges are easy to read, the controls are well-placed and the AM/FM stereo and cassette deck come through loud and clear.

Still, as Anne says, comparing a Saturn to a jet is a bit of a stretch. That supersonic number goes for about $25 million. The SC2? Well, you'll see it's considerably less.



The cockpit of an F-16 and Anne Parker's Saturn SC
an eject button. (Okay, so our

Anne Parker is pictured with a 1995 Saturn SC2. M.S.R.P. for the 1995 Saturn SC2 is $14,855, including retailer prep, sunroof, automatic transmission and cassette player with equalizer. Tax, license, transportation and other options are extra. For more information on Saturn cars, please call us any time at 1-800-522-5000. © 1994 Saturn Corporation.

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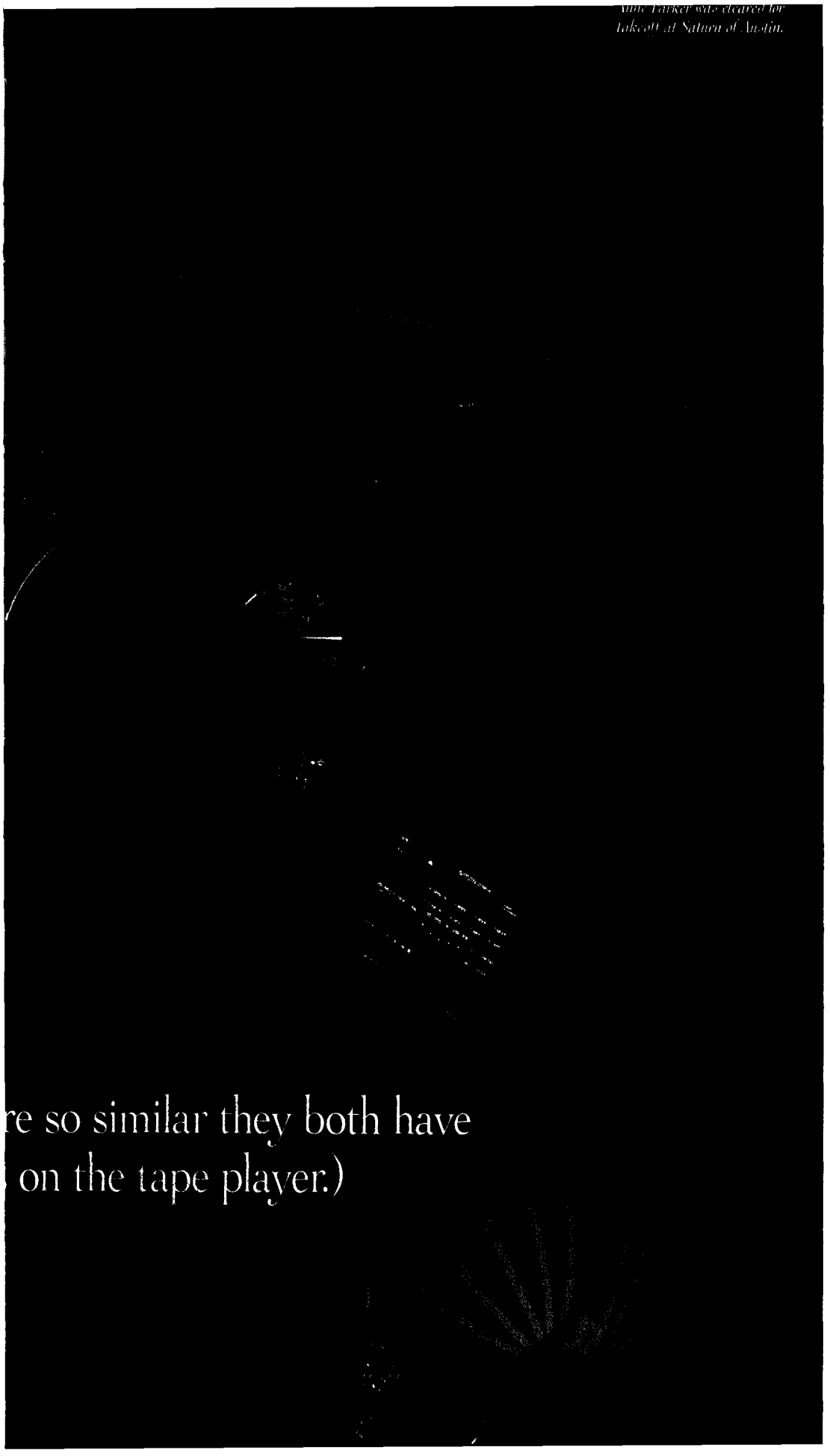

Mike Parker was cleared for takeoff at Saturn of Austin.

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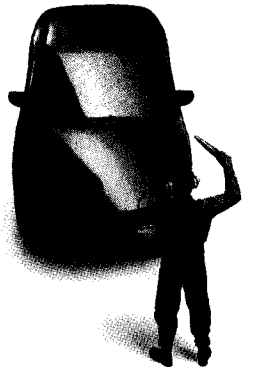

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[redacted]ITH THE STROKE OF A PEN GRAMM WOULD ENI

DAN HABIB/IMPACT VISUALS

October, 1994: On the stump in New Hampshire

The pace of events quickened again for Gramm after 1989. But this time the course he took nearly proved disastrous—at least for his reputation with his conservative base: he involved himself in the negotiations that led to President Bush's ill-fated 1990 budget deals. The details are serpentine, but in their wake Gramm-Rudman had vanished and the top rate of income tax had hopped to 31 percent from Ronald Reagan's 28 percent. Gramm now defends his actions in 1990 on grounds of party loyalty and personal affection for George Bush. But two other considerations must have entered his mind as well. At the time, George Bush seemed certain to be re-elected to the presidency in 1992. Bush's support, or at least his benign neutrality, would thus be indispensable to anyone planning a run for the presidency in 1996—especially if that anyone hailed from Bush's home state, and doubly especially considering that there was a sitting Vice President who would have to be knocked aside. Alternatively, if Bush's backing could not be won, Gramm would need an iron grip on the loyalties of Texas—and its big donors—in the run-up to the 1996 cycle. In order to clamp that grip on the state, Gramm has retreated slightly in recent years from his accustomed ultrapure anti-pork-barrel stance. He helped pull the huge supercollider project to Texas and championed the Houston-based manned space station, while also showing new zeal for Texas's agriculture interests, among them the much-ridiculed mohair subsidy. Those prizes also required presidential good will—which helped to pull him into Bush's budgetary thickets. And unlike Newt Gingrich, who broke ranks with Bush, Gramm, once stuck, could not easily walk away. In the end Gramm cast his vote against the budget deal, but quietly.

Washington conservatives may have felt irritated at Gramm in 1990; back home he was more popular than ever. He won re-election that year with 60.2 percent of the vote, a larger margin than any Texas senatorial candidate had garnered since 1958. He demonstrated stunning fund-raising powers, too. A single 1990 event, staged in the Houston Astrodome, raked in well over $2 million. "You can't be more powerful in Washington than you are at home" is a Gramm maxim. Awed, his Senate colleagues named him chairman of the Republicans' overall senatorial fund-raising drive for the 1992 and 1994 election cycles.

Then, as movie serials used to intone, fate stepped in. To the astonishment of everyone—not least fainthearted Democratic hopefuls like Mario Cuomo and Bill Bradley—the Bush Administration disintegrated and the Republicans found themselves out of power. Dan Quayle was suddenly struck from the Republican line of succession, and a new job needed to be filled: leader of the opposition. Gramm grabbed it.

While Dole and even Gingrich took months to decide that they would not negotiate with Clinton on a health-care plan, and while other Republicans, such as Kemp, Dick Cheney, and Lamar Alexander, vanished onto the speaking circuit, Gramm immediately threw himself into implacable confrontation. "I think Hillary Clinton and I were the only two people who read the whole bill. She loved it and I hated it," he later said. He didn't just hate its rationing, or the 15 percent payroll tax that, he calculated, would probably be needed by decade's end to finance it. After all, he says, "Congress messes up industries every day. But I believed that if people understood that this bill took away something more important than their money, their job, their health care, if they understood it took away their freedom, that was the little stone with which we could slay Goliath." He assembled a panel of senators and representatives to travel the country campaigning against the plan. As conservative criticism punctured the plan and public support leaked away, other Republicans rushed to take up the position that Gramm had occupied months before. But he had been there first, when the spot had looked dangerous, and he did not let anyone forget it.

THE NEW REPUBLICAN HEARTLAND

In his biography of John Maynard Keynes, Robert Skidelsky warns against the easy assumption that "biographical subjects are much more frequently products of their *backgrounds* than of their *times*." Or places. Probably nowhere else in America but Texas—and certainly in no other large state—could a man with such radical views on economics, and such relatively bland views on social issues, rise so high so fast. Nor is Gramm alone. Two of the three most senior Republicans in the House—the majority leader, Dick Armey, and the majority whip, Tom DeLay—are also Texans who combine economic

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radicalism with understated positions on the hot-button issues that excite the Republican faithful elsewhere in the South. A fourth Texan, Bill Archer, chairs the Ways and Means Committee. He has been musing about replacing the income tax with a consumption or value-added tax.

Historically, the Republican Party has taken its tone from one particular state or region at a time: Henry Cabot Lodge's Massachusetts, Robert Taft's Ohio, Ronald Reagan's southern California. Today Gramm's Texas supplies the party with its strongest themes and ideas. Except for Florida, Texas is the most urbanized state in the South: more than 80 percent of the population lives in cities. (In Newt Gingrich's Georgia the figure is a little above 60 percent.) And the Texas Republican Party, since its emergence in the 1970s as a serious political force, has been a metropolitan party, drawing its explosively growing strength—it elected three times as many officeholders in 1994 as in 1982—first from Dallas and environs, a little later from Houston, and only very recently from the rest of the state. The Harris County victory celebration last November 8 filled the exhibition room of a southwest-Houston hotel with expensively tailored young lawyers.

The people who live in and around Texas's cities earn their livings in increasingly sophisticated ways. Although far from wealthy (household income ranks thirty-second in the nation), Texans have managed to diversify their economy beyond oil and agriculture. High-technology companies around Austin and Dallas, and shipping and financial-services companies near Houston and Dallas, employ a rapidly growing population of college graduates, many of them newcomers to the state. Of Texas's 17 million people, 4.3 million were born in the other forty-nine states, and another 1.7 million were born abroad.

In some southern states—Virginia is the clearest example—newcomers have leaned to the left of the rest of the population. That hasn't happened in Texas. On the contrary: Louis Dubose, the editor of the liberal *Texas Observer* newspaper, argues that the heart of fundamentalist Christianity in Texas is not the countryside but the megachurches that line the interstate connecting Dallas and Fort Worth and the beltways around other big cities. The Christian conservatives at the Texas state Republican convention last year, Dubose jokes, weren't wearing farmers' "gimme" caps; they were wearing the plastic pocket-protectors beloved of engineers and computer designers. Just as Islamic fundamentalism wins converts not in the villages but among the uprooted and semi-modernized people of the cities of Algeria and Egypt, so Christian fundamentalism in Texas seems to have won some of its following among the first-generation college graduates who have left small towns in eastern Texas or the Midwest to work for Hewlett-Packard or Electronic Data Systems in Dallas County.

Their religious beliefs do not, however, blind high-tech Christians to the fact that they draw their livelihoods from an integrated world economy. Conservatives throughout the South flirt dangerously with protectionism, Newt Gingrich not least. Gramm never has. He will, though, take trouble to accommodate his constituents' social views. Although wary of school prayer ("It's got to be very strictly limited, and it's got to be voluntary. You can't empower zealots"), he opposes abortion, and in his 1984 campaign for the Senate he made gleeful use of the fact that his opponent, Lloyd Doggett, had received money from a fund-raising event at a gay strip club. Last year he declined to condemn California's Proposition 187, which denies schooling and other benefits to illegal aliens. He artfully weaves religious imagery into his speeches.

There is a religious right in Texas, and it can sometimes score victories. Last summer, for example, an old Goldwaterite named Tom Pauken mobilized discontented prayer enthusiasts and abortion opponents to eject Fred Meyer, a Gramm ally, from the chairmanship of the Texas party and to install Pauken in Meyer's place. But on closer inspection personal antagonisms and resentments provide a much better explanation of what happened in Texas last summer. Meyer is a wealthy Dallas industrialist and a superb fund-raiser, at ease with the big donors who supply one third of the Texas party's resources. (The rest comes from direct mail and telemarketing.) Pauken, a former chairman of the College Republican National Committee and the head of the ACTION agency in the Reagan Administration, hails from the other side of the tracks and—despite his Roman Catholic background and secular outlook—adeptly spoke to like-minded outsiders in the Texas party.

The power of people like Pauken and his supporters is, however, necessarily episodic. It costs more than $2 million a year to run the Texas party between elections. And because Texas is so huge and its population is so widespread, campaigning there is more expensive still. Mammon remains a vastly more useful ally than God in Texas politics, and Fred Meyer will be working for Gramm in 1996.

Gramm hopes to persuade Republican primary voters, especially Christian conservatives, that his economic conservatism *is* cultural conservatism. "If you are talking about values issues," he says, "what is more value-laden than the welfare system? What is more value-related than the tax cuts? Aren't we talking about values when we're talking about stopping the subsidizing of conceiving illegitimate children? Aren't we talking about values when we're talking about cutting spending and doubling the dependent exemption for children?"

Values talk inevitably raises the question of Gramm's own morality. His political conduct has been called into question at least twice. In 1989 the Federal Elections Commission fined his campaign $30,000 for violations relating to his 1984

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Senate race. Then there was what some see as a $50,000 personal gift from a Texas homebuilder and savings-and-loan operator, Jerry Stiles. At Gramm's request Stiles, a longtime supporter, flew a crew of carpenters to Maryland to finish a summer house Gramm owns on the Eastern Shore. Gramm paid Stiles for the work, but an investigation later found that Stiles had charged Gramm $50,000 less than the cost of the job. Then, when Stiles's S&L ran into trouble, he asked Gramm for help. There is no evidence that Gramm interceded improperly for Stiles or that Gramm even knew of Stiles's $50,000 loss. When the loss finally came to light, Gramm wrote Stiles a check for $50,000 and laid the matter before the Senate Ethics Committee. The committee ruled that Gramm had owed Stiles nothing, and Stiles refunded Gramm's money. Stiles seems to have hoped to curry favor with Gramm; five years later, however, no evidence has appeared that the currying worked or that Gramm received anything like an illegal gratuity.

Still, it's a strange story, given that this hyperideological politician rests much of his case to his fellow Republicans on his organizational acumen. Gramm contends that a run for the presidency will cost more than $44 million in 1996. "That's a lot of money to raise when somebody can give you only a thousand dollars. I think management and organization are things that are greatly undervalued in politics. The question is, who can put together this forty-four-million-dollar corporate entity? Who can set up a structure to manage it? No one running for office has ever had to do what you're going to have to do in this election to win the nomination, and that is you're going to have to raise all this money early, you're going to have to run in fifteen or twenty states at the same time, without being the party nominee, without having every political operative in the party working for you—which they will after you get the nomination."

AN ADVENTURESOME PARTY

OF all the similarities between Gramm and Clinton, the one that will have the greatest effect on the 1996 campaign is their agreement that one of the most important issues facing the nation is the apparent dwindling of the prospects of the middle-class American family. Both of them keenly remember a time, not so very long ago, when opportunities seemed to abound. Today's world seems somehow tighter, less expansive. Clinton's explanation of what has gone wrong is technical: changes in the world economy, new technologies and ways of work that have raised the value of trained labor relative to unskilled and semi-skilled. Gramm's analysis is much blunter: "We've gotten off track. It's like a football team. We stopped winning because we stopped doing the things that made us winners. We started to reward people who were doing things that did not represent productive behavior. We started to penalize people who did." It's not some global economic climacteric that is ailing America, in Gramm's eyes: American living standards are eroding because of decisions made in America—because the productive are overtaxed and the unproductive are overprotected.

Fiercely and uncompromisingly, Gramm intends to reverse that distribution of rewards and penalties. Nervous Republicans may hear in his fierceness an ominous warning of a debacle to come—another 1964. But the country's mood has shifted dramatically since those days. Republicans seeking national office need no longer hew to the center.

Gramm's prediction that the list of serious Republican

BLUEBONNETS

I lay down by the side of the road
in a meadow of bluebonnets, I broke
the unwritten law of Texas. My brother

was visiting, he'd been tired, afraid of
his tiredness as we'd driven toward Bremen,
so we stopped for the blue relatives

of lupine, we left the car on huge feet
we'd inherited from our lost father,
our Polish grandfather. Those flowers

were too beautiful to only look at;
we walked on them, stood in the middle
of them, threw ourselves down,

crushing them in their one opportunity
to thrive and bloom. We lay like angels
forgiven our misdeeds, transported

to azure fields, the only word for
the color eluded me—delft, indigo,
sapphire, some heavenly word you might

speak to a sky. I led my terrestrial brother
there to make him smile, and this
is my only record of the event.

We took no pictures, we knew no camera
could fathom that blue. I brushed
the soft spikes, I fingered lightly

the delicate earthly petals, I thought,
This is what my hands do well
isn't it, touch things about to vanish.

—GAIL MAZUR

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presidential aspirants will narrow to himself, Bob Dole, and Lamar Alexander looks more accurate by the day. Dan Quayle can appeal to Republican sentiment that he was treated unfairly by the detested liberal media, and to the growing national consensus that his controversial "Murphy Brown" remarks have proved right after all. But he will be campaigning bearing the stigma of defeat and without an institutional base. Richard Nixon pulled off the trick in 1968, but—to adapt the joke that will haunt Quayle for the rest of his career—Dan Quayle is no Richard Nixon. Republicans don't like to admit it, but they know that the reason the media image of Quayle as a lightweight has endured is that he *is* a lightweight. At any rate, enough of them know it to deny Quayle the 1996 nomination.

Ex officio, Pete Wilson ought to rank high on any list of potential nominees. Not only can he tap the fantastic wealth of California, but he has artfully crafted a new ideological position that might be crudely summed up as Go left on abortion (he's pro-choice), right on race (immigration and affirmative action), and up the middle on economics. And yet Wilson bears two daunting handicaps: as governor, he raised taxes to balance his budget—a sin he has since tried to expiate by calling for a 15 percent tax cut—and in the 1994 campaign he repeatedly promised to serve out his term as governor.

Among the other prominent governors, William Weld, of Massachusetts, saw his hopes run aground on the rocks of the recession of the early 1990s. To lift the veto that the party's social conservatives would put on him for his support for abortion and gay rights, he would need a breathtaking record of tax and spending cuts. He hasn't got it. Tommy Thompson, of Wisconsin, and John Engler, of Michigan, have dropped no hints that they are considering a run. As for Christine Whitman, of New Jersey, despite her tax-cutting, she elicits enthusiasm only as a vice-presidential prospect.

The year 1996 ought to have been Jack Kemp's year. Kemp is the only other Republican to have offered a program as coherent, as principled, and as intensely felt as Gramm's. Throughout his career he has championed conservatism with a smiling face—which is why he has become so vulnerable to the accusation that his conservatism is out of date. Had he resigned from President Bush's Cabinet over the abandonment of the "no new taxes" pledge, he would have sealed his claim on the 1996 nomination. Instead he is exiting into history as a man who never quite seized his moment.

The collapse of Kemp's candidacy leaves Gramm alone on the Republican right. That might attract other conservatives, including the most powerful of them all, House Speaker Newt Gingrich. But it won't be easy for Gingrich to plunge in. Enacting the Contract With America will occupy him late into 1995. If he spends time campaigning and the contract falters, he will open himself to damaging accusations within the party. A Gingrich presidential campaign could also spark uncomfortable demands that he release the names of the contributors to his political-action committee, GOPAC. Besides, Gingrich has just won the job he spent twenty years working for. He would have to be a very discontented personality indeed to jeopardize it by immediately reaching for another one.

The basis of Robert Dole's claim is, essentially, seniority. He ran for Vice President in 1976, finished second in the 1988 primaries, and serves now as the Senate majority leader. He is hugely popular inside the party. Even conservatives who resented his antipathy to supply-side economics in the 1980s have made their peace with him.

Dole's greatest political weakness (or is it his greatest strength?) is his allergy to ideas. He mistrusts them, and he mistrusts people who have them. It's hard to imagine what a President Dole would spend his days doing—except, of course, for building a U.S. ethanol industry second to none. Even so, he exudes power. One Republican compares the Dole machine to the Red Army in its great days: maybe it's creaky and anachronistic, but nothing on earth can match its mass and firepower.

If Dole disdains ideology, Lamar Alexander is attempting to transcend it. He had originally planned to run on a platform of congressional reform: "Cut their pay and send them home." That message, obviously, packs less punch among Republicans today than it did six months ago—so Alexander is campaigning as an "outsider" against the Washington "insiders" Gramm and Dole. He hopes to attract party moderates with his friendly face and speaking style, while winning over conservatives by outlining big—though vague—changes in the way Washington does business.

On the face of it this would seem an unpromising strategy. Alexander, after all, served in the Bush Cabinet as Secretary of Education after two successful terms as a centrist pro-business governor of Tennessee. Never before in his political career has he evidenced any sign of unhappiness with the way the United States is governed. But since 1992 he has struck populist notes whenever he can, if not always on key. Visiting the lower-Manhattan editorial offices of *The Wall Street Journal* one day last August to make his pitch, he arrived in a polo shirt and hiking boots, looking less like the Last Angry Man than like someone who had paid an image consultant $400 an hour to tell him how to dress like Cincinnatus relinquishing the plough.

Any political consultant would have to rank Dole or Alexander as a safer choice than Gramm. Their ideas are less radical, their visages less homely, their personalities less prickly. But, curiously, the staid Republican Party seems to be the party that pays less attention to safety. The roster of recent Democratic presidential candidates is gray with moderation and risk-aversion: Clinton, Dukakis, Mondale. It is the party of Reagan and Gingrich that is the adventuresome party, the party that thrills to political risk. Nominating Gramm would be the biggest risk yet. And yet since last November, Republicans have become even more willing than usual to trust their luck.

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Stories of Our Lives

by JOHN BARTH

It has occurred to Ms. Mimi Adler, whom I like a lot, to wonder whether people reflexively think of their lives as stories because from birth to death they are exposed to so many narratives of every sort, or whether, contrariwise, our notion of what a "story" is, in every age and culture, reflects an innately dramatistic sense of life: a feature of the biological evolution of the human brain and of human consciousness, which appears to be essentially of a scenario-making character.

Ms. Adler's question may strike the reader of these lines as idle, academic, inconsequential—and it's certainly no grabber of an opening for a work of fiction, a bona fide short story. As I pen these words on my new friend's behalf, is not Bosnia bleeding, have not Rwandans been slaughtering one another wholesale, are not 154 pounds of deadly weapons-grade plutonium still missing from a Japanese nuclear reactor, and does not Haiti's immemorial misery more or less drag on, together with untold other large- and small-scale catastrophes right round the planet? In the face of so much wretchedness and gravity, what justification have Mimi and I for entertaining such chicken-or-egg questions as whether people's lives or their stories have, so to speak, ontological primacy?

The woman's smile needed no coaching at all: it was a brilliant, knowing, persistent, disconcerting smile that said, among other things, "*We* understand the subtext here, don't we?"

That question, believe me, we take as seriously as we take the question that it questions. M's coming on to fifty, my wife's age, although you'd never guess it by looking at either of those trim, athletic, handsome, and energetic women. Like Mrs. Narrator, Ms. Adler is a morally serious citizen and a dedicated teacher of young people. I myself am a

Illustrations by Gwyn Stramler

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dozen years older, Mimi's husband's a touch older yet, and you'd guess *that* at once if you saw us with our spouses, although both Robert and I are in good shape for our age—anyhow, were, up to the time of this story. If less intense than our mates in the moral-political sphere, we, too, are unfrivolous professionals. Rob's a cognitive scientist, I've just decided, from whose acquaintance with current theories of consciousness Mimi will have picked up what she knows about the biological evolution of our brains and their propensity for spinning scenarios in order to sort out the data continuously flooding all our senses: in short, our experience of life. Rob cannot, however, speak to his wife's late perplexity on this which-causes-which question, as he's down in D.C. just now consulting for the National Institutes of Health. Yours truly, as aforenoted, makes up short stories—not for a living, as there's no living in it, but for the serious

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pleasures of dreaming up characters like Mimi and Rob and situations like the one I'm about to put them in, of working out plots and forms and themes and images and actions and voices (in a word, *stories*), and of finding the language wherewith to get those stories told. If that's not seriousness enough, I also teach part-time in a good American university, coaching graduate-student apprentices in my profit-poor but deeply gratifying trade.

In fact, that's how I came to know M.A. (so her initials just now suggest to me), whose husband, I here decide, I already knew slightly as an extradepartmental colleague. Our university's M.A. story-making program is age-blind, you see, as well as gender-blind, ethnic-identity-blind, prior-degree-blind—blind to everything other than talent, accomplishment, and promise. When we've sorted through the pile of applications to select the dozen or so most likely-seeming, we're pleased, of course, if they turn out to be a multiculturally mixed bag of women and men, gays and straights, youngs and less youngs, ets and ceteras; but as long as they're the most evidently talented, accomplished, and promising of the lot, we don't finally care (so we tell ourselves) if our dazzling dozen turn out to be uniformly middle-aged gay white lapsed-Mormon doctors of philosophy from Saskatchewan. The group five years ago numbered only one of those among the usual ethnic-sexual-actuarial-aesthetic smorgasbord, which happened also to include this uncommonly attractive mid-fortyish Jewish-or-Italian-or-both-by-the-look-of-her lady whose stories (as I knew from reviewing the application files) were poignant but playful "postmodern" spinoffs from notable scientific or philosophical propositions: Zeno's paradoxes, Schrödinger's wave-function equations, whatever. They wanted revision and polishing, to be sure, like the stories of everybody else in the program, toward closing those crucial last millimeters between gifted apprentice and truly professional work; otherwise their authors would be applying to magazine editors instead of to us. The woman's smile, however, needed no coaching at all: it was a brilliant, knowing, persistent, disconcerting smile that said, among other things, "*We* understand the subtext here, don't we?" and that would have been all the more unsettling if she hadn't directed it at just about everyone to whom she spoke or listened.

My habit on opening day is to go around the seminar room asking each new hand in turn to tell, by way of introduction, what name you go by, where you hail from, by what waypoints you arrived among us, what constitutes your past training and experience in the yarning trade, what you have in mind to do in your season here, whatever else it pleaseth you to mention of an identificatory nature. When Ms. Adler's turn came (she sat, as she would invariably through that academic year, at the opposite end of the long seminar table from me, dressed in the oversized university sweatshirt and black running tights in which she routinely jogged the five miles from campus to her house after class), she beamed that mighty smile the length of the room, declared matter-of-factly, "*Mi chiamo Mimi*," and then went on in her rich contralto speaking voice to give us her résumé in an ad-lib paraphrase of that famous soprano aria from *La Bohème*. Most got the joke; some didn't. From that subtextual smile of hers I could almost imagine that she had somehow guessed that Puccini, like tennis and sailing and the stories of Italo Calvino, had been among the touchstones of her new coach's courtship and marriage.

In a group whose skills were better than average, the woman proved at least an average apprentice fictioneer, a first-rate critic of her comrades' efforts (she really *did* see subtexts, sometimes significant ones, lurking between their lines), and perhaps the most generally liked of that year's seminarians. Our cordial association continued, less closely, thereafter: the two couples at mixed-doubles tennis and certain university social events, Mimi and I at readings by visiting writers or *tout court* over occasional faculty-club lunches. As happens in more cases than not, her fiction, alas, for all its bright promise, got nowhere; she had reached the distressingly familiar stage of doing nothing correctably *wrong* in her art, really, but of doing nothing on the other hand so remarkably well as to distinguish her productions from the thousands of others that every magazine and book editor remains deluged with. Fortunately for her (now ex-) coach, if not for herself, the critic in her was too exquisitely aware of this state of affairs to make its articulation incumbent upon me; there was nothing to be done, we agreed, except cross fingers and soldier on until her muse smiled, if the bitch ever relented. M's own smile, at that, told me she was already onto some subtext between forkfuls of Caesar salad, but it was not one that I was privy to until early in the current semester, when over another such touch-base lunch she announced that her personal *Bohème* had reached Act Two's closing curtain: in this restaging, no echt-nineteenth-century tuberculosis for the soprano, but echt-late-twentieth AIDS for the tenor.

Rob? AIDS? No.

"Rob, AIDS, yes." Her splendid mahogany eyes filled right up. "HIV-positive, anyhow, with AIDS to follow as doth the night . . . the day . . ."

That "day" trailed into suspension points and tears. When, in time, the tale got itself told (in the faculty-club parking lot, whereto we retreated for self-collection), it was of her steadfast, good-shape-for-his-age husband's feeling lately so under the weather that even as he completed his arrangements for early retirement (sixty-five is officially early in our institution), he underwent a physical exam more thorough than his routine annual checkups and thus learned the fatal news.

"So where'd it come from?" she said, sparing me the discomfort of asking. No extracurricular sexual contacts, her husband swore, since back in the hyperpermissive sixties, and his wife (who at his urging had had herself tested and been shown HIV-negative) saw no reason to question his fi-

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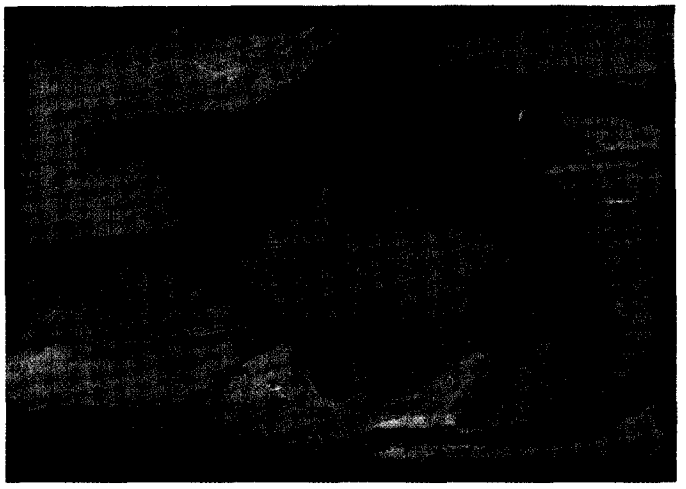
delity. No needles except those in his doctor's medical lab and Rob's own cognitive-research facilities, where a certain amount of animal experimentation was carried on. Workers in such labs are not routinely tested for HIV; given the standard sterile precautions of any well-run laboratory, however, the chances of accidental virus transmission in those venues must be near zero. Some while back he'd had prostate surgery in the university hospital; Mimi, who regarded hospitals as dangerous anyhow, believed that place and occasion the likeliest suspect—although the patient had had no blood transfusions, and our hospital is among the most prestigious in the land. Investigation was continuing. Through it all, my friend reported, her husband was being a brick, but Mimi herself and their two grown children were devastated, not only, in M's case, by the prospect of losing to that revolting malady her best friend and life mate and the anticipated balance of their years together—as many as twenty, had luck been theirs, after which she had resolved to terminate promptly, with Seconal, her expected widowhood—but for at least two other reasons as well, which may strike the reader as unseemly, although I confess that I myself found them not difficult to sympathize with:



• The dreadful turn of events had the incidental effect of relegating Mimi Adler to a supporting role, as she saw it, in her own life story. More accurately (for I protested this idea at once, as had Robert, and as even more vehemently did my wife, when I recounted the tale to her), it forced a radical, lamentable revision of her lead role therein. Instead of Gifted Middle School Teacher blossoming into Gifted Fiction Writer (a scenario ever less tenable in any case), she had been recast as GMST obliged to become Heroic (or not-so-heroic) Nurse of Lovable and Competent but Otherwise Unremarkable Scientist.

These latter adjectives surprised me; I cannot dispute them, but had no idea that Mimi saw Rob so. Granted, she was distraught; all the same, I sensed a subtext. Moreover,

• As aforementioned, she had become all but convinced that although she was not without literary talent, her gift was, finally, an amateur's flair, not a true vocation (I'm afraid I agree, but I'm not about to tell her so, and only in time will we know for sure), and so she would not have that enviable life preserver to help float her through her present pass and impending bereavement. She would be obliged to survive, if she chose to, on the strength of having been an okay mother, a quite good teacher, a truly loving and all-but-100-percent-faithful wife, a dedicated nurse of her husband's terminality, and a more or less stoic widow perhaps devoted to worthy causes, unless she decided to go the Hemlock Society route and to hell with it. She'd had more in mind, frankly, she told me (my attention, for all my sympathy, was not undistracted by the subtext of that "all-but-100-percent-faithful"): how was she to come to terms with mere above-averagehood, especially in the face of this miserable new plot twist, when all her life she had aspired to *excel*, to live *transcendently*?

It was these reflections and their accompanying guilt, she declared—turning on that singular smile now while making free with the pocket tissue pack that I'd proffered en route to the parking lot—that had led her to thinking in this new way about people's lives as stories, et cetera, and thence to the question that *this* story opens with her pondering, quite as she might have opened one of her own. She supposed herself a monster even to think of such questions under the circumstances ("Maybe she is," my wife will allow); if so, so be it. She just thought her erstwhile coach might be amused.

I forgive you that "amused," I told her then and retell her now—and I trust the reader to grant that M's introductory question wasn't entirely frivolous after all. It's going to have to wait for an answer, however, while the narrative camera cuts to a certain silver-alloy coin that fell out of my pants pocket onto the winter-dormant lawn of the faculty club as Mimi and I short-cut to the parking lot to avoid public display of her emotion and I fetched out in her behalf that little Kleenex pack. A Canadian twenty-five-cent piece, that coin was, picked up casually in Toronto some while earlier when I happened to be author-touring up that way, and not yet recycled into some Baltimore parking meter (although to my eye all North American quarters are of identical dimension, soft-drink machines know the difference): on one side the head of ELIZABETH II D. G. REGINA in classic starboard profile; on the other a bull moose portside ditto, haloed by CANADA 1984 and bearing in his mighty antler rack the declared value 25 CENTS. On both faces a circle of raised dots just inside the milled edge, to complicate counterfeiting. The I character didn't notice his loss and never will; nor did my stressed-out lunch companion. The I narrator of this stories-of-our-lives story, on the other hand, not only observed but *caused* the coin's fall from right trouser

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pocket to campus grass, to the end of informing or reminding the reader, by association, of a certain schoolroom narrative exercise, called "*L'histoire d'un sou,*" that used to be assigned in the French lycées. Imagine and recount the adventures of a common coin, that exercise demanded, as it circulates from hand to hand through one's society: perhaps from mint to bank and anon to some aristocratic lady's purse, thence serially to the pocket of that lady's pilfering chambermaid, to that chambermaid's middle-aged shopkeeping lover, to the young prostitute whose services that shopkeeper occasionally hires, to that prostitute's illegitimate but much-prized five-year-old son, Rodolfe (by the aristocratic lady's philandering husband, as it happens), to that lad's bullying seven-year-old alleymate, Victor, who snatches and runs off with it, to the gutter of the cobbled Montmartre street into which Victor darts and fearless little Rodolfe pursues him just in time to be struck by the aristocratic husband's carriage, and thence, tossed away by the conscience-stricken Victor, down the storm drain of that street into the sewers of Paris, where it goes unnoticed by Jean Valjean, in flight from the detective Javert, but not by that keen-eyed latter, who, though not an otherwise superstitious fellow, pauses for two seconds to pick it up lest *tout le jour* he have bad luck and thereby, *ironiquement*, affords Valjean the opportunity to elude him at least for another chapter. In analogous wise, this particular Canadian quarter in its ten-year tour of duty had passed through 240 hands, remaining in possession of each for a median fortnight over a range from ten seconds (given as change in what must have been the only gay bar in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in 1986, to a lapsed-Mormon Ph.D. candidate from Moose Jaw, and by him promptly passed to the friend with whom he was splitting the tab) to three years (in the miscellaneous-foreign-coins ashtray of the Florida apartment of a Bahamian real-estate speculator whose travels took her to Canada occasionally but not often), before being given to me, again as change, in the delightful cafeteria-market-restaurant Mövenpick Marché in downtown Toronto, where that lady happened to have shopped and lunched on the same day that my wife and I happened to shop and dine there in mid–book tour. Now, on a Maryland February afternoon, it lies nearly vertical against blades of hybrid lawn grass on a seldom-crossed sward of faculty-club turf, and there it could remain "forever," perhaps mashed into the soil, come spring, by the riding mowers of campus groundskeepers and gradually thatched and sedimented over, the narrative camera locked uneventfully upon it ad infinitum like Andy Warhol's literal camera upon the Empire State Building in his 1964 film *Empire*; or perhaps accidentally excavated a year or a century hence by a crew relandscaping the area or digging footers for an extension of the building and examined by the not-otherwise-superstitious finder for lucky numbers to use in playing the state lottery, thence on with its story.

In fact (so to speak), however, it gets noticed no more than an hour later by another colleague of mine, whom I've never met personally but know to be an art historian with a minor, as it were, in conchology, from which hobby he has acquired the half-conscious habit of keeping a beachcomber's eye out even in the city. An unorthodox fellow in several respects, Associate Professor Walter Ellison believes that paths should be laid where people walk, literally and figuratively, rather than constraining folks' walking to already-laid paths, and so he makes it his pedestrian practice, especially on campus, to take the most direct or otherwise convenient route to his destination, across lawns and even through flower beds and shrubbery, as a sort of service to the university's landscape planners. Short-cutting like Mimi and me-the-character to the parking lot that she and I have already exited in our separate cars (M to go on with the grimly plot-turned story whereof she is the reluctant, ineluctable protagonist, I with the exfoliation of this, whereof I am teller-in-chief but wherein I have only a walk-on, drive-off role), young Professor Ellison espies "my" coin in the grass and, recalling the folk-rhyme advisory, bends over as if to pick it up but in fact merely to inspect it before perversely *letting it lie* in order to defy, on principle, proverbial wisdom. Although Walt's only thirty-five and is in good physical condition from playing indoor tennis twice or thrice weekly at a suburban club, the muse of irony sees fit at this point cruelly to inflict upon him what will turn out to be a lifelong intermittent spinal-disk problem in consequence of that simple movement. Some fluke of leverage, one supposes; in any case, the pain is so sudden and shocking that between coin and car he hobbles in a sweat and at one moment nearly faints. It's all he can do to ease himself into his vintage bean-green Volvo wagon and drive home. By the time he reaches his Mount Washington neighborhood, his lumbar area has so seized up that he groans involuntarily at every major movement from driveway to lavatory (where he helps himself to a tablet of Valium) to living-room rug, a second-hand Heríz on whose central medallion he lies supine for the next two hours, until Barbara comes home from her new job in the reference department of the Enoch Pratt Free Library. She's alarmed. He explains. She commiserates, and doses her recently anxious self with the Valium long ago prescribed for Walter's wry neck by the same physician who, as it irrelevantly happens, diagnosed Rob Adler's AIDS (the drug, anyhow expired, will prove less effective in and for her case than as a simple muscle relaxant in her husband's). The couple then settle into a pained parody of their usual end-of-workday routine: As they're both Valiumed, in lieu of their customary glass of California chardonnay they sip with their trail-mix hors d'oeuvres a very weak solution of jug chablis and club soda, once Walt has gotten himself propped against the couch-front. Even raising the wineglass in ironic toast to the muse of irony—for they're scheduled to vacation next week at the Club Mediterranée in Cancún, their first such holiday, where they've been looking forward to tennis, snorkel-

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ing, beachcombing, and touring the nearby Mayan ruins—makes him ouch.

"So what was your most interesting call today?" he asks her as usual, though it's not usually in so clenched a voice. Barbara works the Pratt's telephone-information-service desk—"doing kids' homework for them," she complains, for indeed they'll call to say, "I'm writing this paper for eighth grade? Can you tell me about Spain?"

"Nothing terrific. Some lady wanted Erwin Schrödinger's equation for quantum-mechanical wave functions, and I tracked it down easily enough but didn't know how to read it to her. I mean, it's not like saying '*E* equals *mc* squared,' you know? The thing's humongous and full of hieroglyphics. Then some guy needed the name and date of that Warhol flick where the camera stays fixed forever on the Empire State Building—"

"*Empire*. Sixty-eight or -nine? *Aiyi!*"

"Poor thing. Sixty-four." As to Cancún, they incline two days later to go on with the trip, although a statement from Walter's doctor would entitle them to a refund of their prepayment. Thanks in part to a fresh prescription, the back pain has eased somewhat each day; they need the break—especially Barb, who finds life more stressful lately than does her inner-directed mate. They'll be able at least to read and sunbathe and eat and drink and perhaps visit the Tulum ruins down-coast from Cancún—maybe even snorkel the reefs, carefully, on calm days.

Do they go? Go they do, with unequally shared misgivings. Walt, a workaholic by nature, whose notion of holiday has historically been either wall-to-wall museum touring or serious amateur conchology, merely hopes that their first real vacation-vacation won't be spoiled and that his pulled muscle or pinched nerve or slipped disk won't prove to be an ongoing or recurring disability (alas, it will). He has come to depend on vigorous physical exercise, like sustained mental work, as a safety valve in his life with Barbara—a non-athlete and a bit of a complainer lately. She hopes the same, of course, for her sake as well as his; notwithstanding his inner and outer strengths, her husband's a real baby, in her opinion, on the rare occasions when anything's physically amiss with him, whereas she, at any given moment in her life story, will likely be bearing up pretty stoically, without medication, under half a dozen assorted minor ailments. Perhaps that discontent is why, only three weeks into her job at the Pratt and just a week before this Yucatán vacation, to her own considerable astonishment she permitted herself to go to bed with an attractive and rather famous senior departmental colleague of her husband's: an unmarried programmatic flirt who Walter himself suspects is either gay or asexual but who turned out—in the remarkable episode that followed one of the fellow's periodic consultancy visits to the Pratt's fine-arts collection, his coincidental path-crossing with Barbara as both were leaving the building at the end of her workday, his offering her a lift home in his bronze-gold Lexus to save her cab fare (Barb's little Honda was being serviced), and his all but daring her, en route, to stop in for a look at the rather grand condo he recently bought in a spiffy new high-rise overlooking the university—to be a decidedly more energetic and imaginative lover, on first and second go at least, than her husband of seven years. Now she is, if not quite guilt-stricken, at least guilt-nagged, all the more because, with poor Walt hors de combat, on the day before their Club Med flight she took the initiative of telephoning Franco *from work*, ostensibly to tell him that she had really admired his new place, and that of the two bedroom-drapery fabrics about which he'd asked her opinion, she definitely recommended the darker, "stronger" one with the seashell motif.

"I value your input, Barbara," he had replied in his only slightly accented but heavily testosteronic baritone. No mention, however, of *his* having enjoyed, as had she, their surprising roll in his high-rise hay; no insinuating suggestion that perhaps she would like to have a look at the seashell drapes when they were made and hung. Mortification, to have cheated on her husband with, of all people, the acting chair of his department, and to have been by him judged, perhaps, no good in bed! It makes her want to climb all over her ailing seatmate now in contrite reaffirmation of their marriage bond—but apart from the unseemliness of such behavior, the long charter flight has made Walt's back at least temporarily even sorer. As they circle in over the mangrove- and chicle-thick expanse of Yucatán, her head begins to throb in a way that she can almost imagine signals migraine. She removes the prescription sunglasses that, for one reason or another, she has lately taken to wearing indoors as well as out, and massages the bridge of her nose. The ache neither disappears nor, thank heaven, comes on more strongly.

After they've checked in, along with a festive busload of other new arrivals, been assigned their simple but comfortable quarters, and at Barbara's suggestion pushed the twin beds together to make one large one (she has to do most of the pushing), she asks, "Could we maybe sack out for a while before we explore the place?" Walt is disinclined at first—he didn't come to Yucatán to nap through this four-and-a-half-thousand-dollar vacation—but then he sees that napping is not what she has in mind, and although he'd rather reconnoiter the resort's impressive spread and hit the beach, he tries to get into her sportive mood. "You'll have to get on top," he tells her.

She smiles behind her dark glasses. "That can be arranged." Moreover, when they're almost undressed, she surprises him by suggesting that they remove each other's underpants with their teeth.

"Hot damn," her husband responds, assuming she's joking, and with his hands whisks off first his own briefs and then hers. In fact, however, she was quite serious: in her session with Franco, he not only had insisted that Barbara be-

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stride him with her sunglasses in place ("So *barbaric*," he had teased) but had proposed, as they subsequently redressed, that next time they undress each other with their teeth. It was her amused excitement at that prospect that had prompted her follow-up phone call: a disappointment, but surely for the best.

"Take those damn *glasses* off," Walt now mock-scolds her when she bestrides him—just as she was about to reach back and down to do with her forefingertip a certain little thing to him that Franco . . .

"Isn't it sexier like this?"

Smiling, he reaches up and removes the offending item. "I like to see who it is I'm making love with, okay?" He folds the earpieces and sets the sunglasses on a nightstand. Feeling her headache rethreaten, Barbara declares, "It's just the same old wife as always," and hobbyhorses him straight to ejaculation so that she can dismount, dose herself with aspirin, and get those glasses back on. "Rain check," she tells him when he makes to reciprocate orally.

But as she unfolds the eyeglasses (before even washing up), one hinge screw works loose and drops out, and the earpiece comes off in her hand.

"Oh, God. We've got to find it!"

Naked on all fours she goes, searching the rugless quarry-tile floor in vain for the tiny screw.

"What am I going to *do*?" She's borderline frantic. "They're my only glasses!"

Her startled husband reasonably supposes that all eyeglass-hinge screws are alike, unless some are metric and some not; they can buy the cheapest pair of overpriced nonprescription shades in the club's boutique and use one of its screws to replace hers.

"It'll never work!" She sits Turk-fashion on the bare tiles, head in hands. "What am I going to do with my life?"

Surprised at her near hysteria, Walt does his best to calm her—"Jesus, Barb!"—although experience has taught him that his efforts in this line are as liable to aggravate as to soothe.

The headache comes on: in fact, her first full-fledged migraine. To bed she retreats, not for sport this time. Seeing their vacation week on the verge of going down the drain, Walt half ruefully, half resentfully goes to check out the boutique as proposed, acquiescing, however, to his wife's insistence that he buy nothing in the way of sunglasses until she inspects and approves. In her judgment, he's reckless with their money. He finds, of course, sunglasses aplenty for sale there—*muchos* pesos per pair, but so what, compared with the cost of this trip? If the parts prove incompatible, perhaps he can use a screw from his own eyeglasses to repair his wife's and then jury-rig his with a paper clip scrounged from the establishment's business office. He strolls the hibiscus- and bougainvillea-rich grounds, noting bitterly that their luckier plane-and-bus mates are already enjoying the magnificent beach and the splendid Mexican Caribbean out there—its reefs abounding, no doubt, in jim-dandy shells.

Back at their room he finds a note on the dresser: *Sorry to've come unhinged(!) Gone to infirmary. Don't follow; will be okay. Will look for you on beach. Love you.*

His resentment melts, leaving only pity and affection; he knows *he*'s not the easiest person in the world to live with either, and he doesn't for a moment doubt the bond between them. He changes into a swimsuit, loads their beach bag with towels, sun lotions, his snorkeling mask, a plastic shell-identification card, and a book on Mayan artifacts, and advises his wife, on the back of her note to him, to look for him and/or the bag on the narrow stretch of beach just in front of their unit.

To reach that stretch properly, one is meant to follow a paved and landscaped walk for several hundred yards toward the club's central buildings, to the pool area and main beach access, and then backtrack along the strand itself, which is separated from the landscaped grounds by a low fence atop a five-foot embankment. Walt, however, takes the direct route, picking up a white plastic lounge chair as he crosses the lawn. That chair's one-piece molded curves—designed for nested stacking and for reclining in average though nonadjustable comfort—remind him of recumbent stone figures of the Mayan god Chacmool, ubiquitous in the region. Full-size replicas stand at the resort's entrance, and miniatures are for sale in the boutique. Careful of his back, he hefts the chair over the fence and slides it down the bank, and then climbs over and down after it with their beach bag. He has the strip to himself. "Chacmool" he positions where Barbara is most likely to notice it from their second-floor balcony, and he sets the bag in plain view on the chair's belly, so to speak—just as, if he remembers correctly, sacrificial victims were once positioned on the original. Then he wets his mask lens with saliva against fogging and, at last, enters the welcoming sea.

The water is warm, clear, and beautiful, with a moderate

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current from upshore, where the main beach is. Without swim fins (he means to borrow a pair from the snorkeling shack after Barb settles down) it takes a bit of effort to hover in place; he can more easily ride downstream on the current and walk back. He does that for a hundred yards or so, admiring the clean sand bottom, the mostly healthy-looking coral, the flamboyant fish, and the occasional top shell or other mollusk, which he inspects and identifies but refrains on principle from collecting. No Barbara in sight when he returns to Chacmool. Deciding that the beach bag is reasonably safe, he walks in the other direction—farther this time, perhaps a quarter mile—to the edge of the main bathing area, in order to snorkel the current home.

His wife's surprising question—"What am I going to do with my life?"—haunts him as he floats. He knows himself to be an anti-dramatic, even a plodding, soul, at least in contrast to her higher-strung sensibility; he cannot imagine putting that question to himself, for example, in the absence of objective crisis, such as disablement so crippling that he couldn't work, or the loss of his wife to accident or disease (divorce doesn't occur to him; over the course of their marriage he has been tempted no more to infidelity than to illegal drugs, nor has he ever thought to wonder whether Barb has been). He sometimes regrets, even keenly, their not having children, especially when he's with his young nieces and nephews, but he finally shrugs at his infertility, as at his not being wealthy or movie-star handsome, and gets on with it. What is he going to do with his life? He's going to snorkel this stretch of sea floor; read up on the Mayans or beachcomb or both; go to dinner this evening; perhaps try tennis *mañana,* if his back permits (the swimming seems to help it); and then tour the Tulum ruins, where he particularly looks forward to viewing the astronomically calibrated temples of Marriage and Birth . . .

A nonmarine something on the bottom catches his eye, rolling lazily with the current over a sandy patch between coral rocks ten feet under: a pair of sunglasses, of all things, in design rather like Barbara's, though with hot-pink frames rather than black. Amused (and careful of his back), he dives and retrieves them, noting as he surfaces that the hinge hardware seems uncorroded and moves freely. If the lenses were prescription-ground, he would turn the glasses in at the reception desk; as they're not—just an ordinary pair of ladies' shades, perhaps knocked off some bikini'd young miss up-beach an hour or two ago as she frolicked with her boyfriend in the gentle surf—he'll cannibalize them in Barb's behalf, and reassemble and return them if the experiment fails. Truly, although he can understand his mate's despairing question in a hypothetical way, at gut level he finds it virtually incomprehensible.

There she is, he sees now, in the downshore distance: a fetchingly bikini'd and sun-visored miss herself, stretched out on Señor Chacmool with the bag beside her and reading a book. That last he takes for a hopeful sign, as is her apparently making shift with her one-stemmed sunglasses instead of throwing up her hands. He tucks his treasure into the crotch of his swimsuit and happily strokes herward.

Shading her eyes with one hand, Barbara watches him wade ashore, his mask perched up on his forehead (her own forehead, though less ax-edged than before, still feels like a seismic fault about to let go). He reaches down into the front of his swimsuit as if to expose himself.

"Hubby to the rescue!"

"Where'd you get those?"

"*Frutas de mar*, and more where these came from." Pattering on, he rummages through the beach bag. "Want to check for yourself? How's your head these days, by the way?"

"A wreck. But it'll pass."

"*All passes*," he intones, fishing out the Swiss Army knife that he carries with him everywhere; "*art alone endures*. John Ruskin? Omar Khayyám? Art Garfunkel?" He has expected to have to use the point of the knife's smaller cutting blade to unscrew the hinge, but finds to his gratified surprise that while the main screwdriver/cap-lifter blade is, as he anticipated, too broad and thick to fit the tiny slot, on the can-opener blade there's a finer, narrower screwdriver tip that he'd never particularly noticed, evidently designed for just such employment. "Ah, those Swiss," he natters happily. "I hope our army never has to cross knives with their army. Voilà!" He displays the minuscule part in the palm of his hand. "We lose this one, we've still got a spare. The patient, please."

"The earpiece is up in our room."

No matter, he replies; he can anyhow test the threads. Better yet, they'll start a new fashion. In less than a minute he has installed a hot-pink left-side earpiece in place of the absent black one. "If the screw fits, wear it," he proposes. Or he can restore the original next time they're in their room; or she can go pink both port and starboard; or they can mix and match each time she takes her shades off to bestride him. "Whenever you need a little you-know-what," he concludes, presenting her with the odd-looking but perfectly serviceable specs. "On with the story?"

To his dismay, he sees she's weeping and shaking her head. For a moment he fears he's done something amiss—but now she takes in both her hands not the sunglasses but *his* hand, and covers it with tears and kisses, sobbing the most soul-wrenched, soul-wrenching sobs that he has ever in his innocent life heard the human animal give forth, although in truth it is capable of much greater.

The loser of those serendipitously found sunglasses, Mme. Jacqueline Masson, of Lyons, France, is, as it happens, neither young nor currently bikini'd nor a miss, nor was she frolicking with a boyfriend in the surf at time of loss, although she has been and done all of the above in years gone by. A veteran member of Club Mediterranée, at age fifty she has vacationed in some two dozen of that or-

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ganization's resorts over as many winters. This is, however, her first visit to Cancún; she and her husband inclined to the literally Mediterranean clubs or, of the Caribbean ones, those in departments of France—namely, Martinique and Guadeloupe. Moreover, it is her first vacation trip as a widow, in the company of women friends from Lyons instead of her dear Bertrand, a physician in that city who succumbed to leukemia just about this time last year. Three days into this experiment, she supposes it's going neither well nor badly. Her two friends, somewhat younger (one recently divorced, the other "on holiday" from spouse and children), have been consistently animated, even festive—in part, no doubt, to keep her own spirits up. They have flirted harmlessly with the handsome young Gentils Organisateurs who manage the sports and other activities; they've *tsk*ed together at the rowdy American teenagers and the resort's cuisine, which is generally inferior to that of the clubs they're used to and is directed, they're convinced, at less discriminating Yankee and Canadian appetites. They've done aerobics and yoga and archery and tennis and have even tried windsurfing. In amused defiance of Mexican law (nobody seems really to care) they have declared a certain stretch of beach at the far end of the resort topless, and have been gratified to see half a dozen other women guests of various ages and nationalities follow their bare-breasted lead. Solange, the divorcée, today even proposed escalation to total nudity; proud of her still-sleek derrière, she wears bikini bottoms with only the tiniest of triangles in front and a mere string up the cleft behind—but even that, she has reminded them, is more than they would be cumbering themselves with at Guadeloupe's Caravelle or Martinique's Buccaneer Creek.

"*Vive la France*," Edith agreed, and although her body at forty-six is holding up less well than Jacqueline's at fifty, not

---

DARLING

1

I break this toast for the ghost of bread in Lebanon.
The split stone, the toppled doorway.

Someone's kettle has been crushed.
Someone's sister has a gash above her right eye.

And now our tea has trouble being sweet.
A strawberry softens, turns musty,

overnight each apple grows a bruise.
I tie both shoes on Lebanon's feet.

All day the sky in Texas which has seen no rain since June
is raining Lebanese mountains, Lebanese trees.

What if the air grew damp with the names of mothers,
the clear belled voices of first-graders

pinned to the map of Lebanon like a shield?
When I visited the camp of the opposition

near the lonely Golan, looking northward toward
Syria and Lebanon, a vine was springing pinkly from a tin can

and a woman with generous hips like my mother's
said Follow me.

2

Someone was there.
Someone not there now was standing.
Someone in the wrong place
with a small moon-shaped scar on his left cheek
and a boy by the hand.

Who had just drunk water, sharing the glass.
Who had not thought about it deeply
though they might have, had they known.
Someone grown and someone not-grown.
Who thought they had different amounts of time left.
This guessing game ends with our hands in the air,
becoming air.
One who was there is not there, for no reason.
Two who were there.

It was almost too big to see.

3

Our friend from Turkey says language is so delicate
he likens it to a darling.

We will take this word in our arms.
It will be small and breathing.
We will not wish to scare it.
Pressing lips to the edge of each syllable.
Nothing else will save us now.
The word "together" wants to live in every house.

—NAOMI SHIHAB NYE

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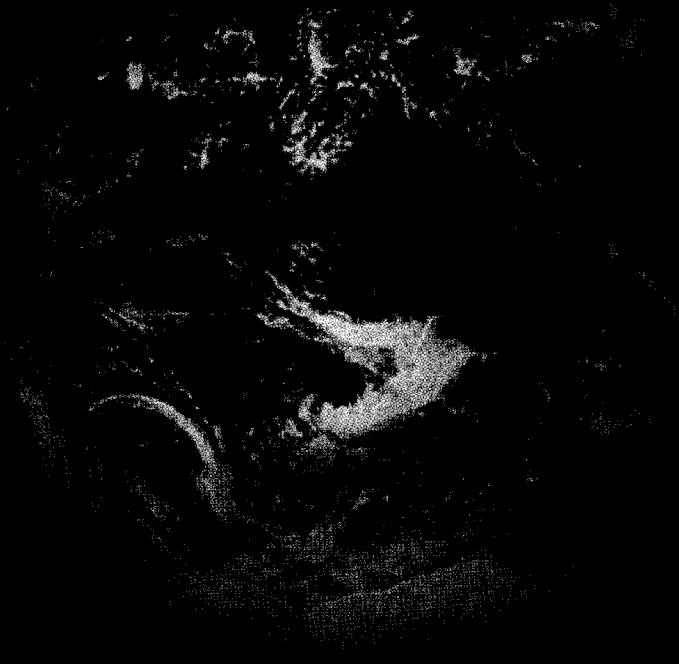
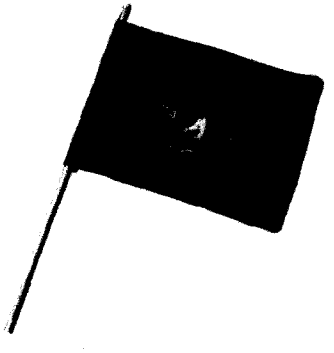
we have endangered the future of our children
and our children's children ...
It reminds us how helpless this planet is --
something that we must hold in our arms
and care for ... "

Margaret Mead,
March 21, 1977





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to mention Solange's at forty, she took the lead in going bottomless on the spot—which happened to be hip-deep in the gentle surf.

"*Pour la patrie!*" Solange cheered, and was soon brandishing her famous thong bottom over her head like a banner.

"*Liberté, egalité, sororité*," Jacqueline affirmed, and bent to follow suit just as a somewhat larger wave pushed her off balance. Hobbled at the ankles by her dropped bikini, she tumbled with a little whoop and was unable simultaneously to slip her feet out of the garment and to hold her sunglasses in place. When she regained her footing, the swimsuit bottom was in hand, the glasses were gone, and all three women were laughing merrily.

"*Là, là!*" Solange pointed at a hot-pink flash on the sand-stirred bottom, and redoubtable Edith dived for it, but the undertow of the approaching next wave swept the glasses out of sight. Their loser shrugged: *Tant pis*. She would be stopping at the boutique anyhow before dinner, for postcards, and would buy another pair. A trifle.

But in fact the little loss provokes an inward sigh: she bought those particular sunglasses in Agadir, Morocco, five or six years back, when, at Bertrand's urging, they spent a few days at the old original Club Med there, and they subsequently became her unofficial beach-holiday specs. Her marriage, she supposes, was not extraordinarily satisfying, but it was at least ordinarily so; she misses it and her always-too-busy husband terribly (his terminal illness was the most time they'd spent together since their honeymoon). Her grown son, the image of his father, rather bores her, and his wife she can scarcely abide. As for her women friends, bless them, they were altogether more enjoyable as supplementary companions than they are as the principal ones that, *faute de mieux*, they have become for her; Solange is quite naturally more involved with her current lover back home, Edith with both her husband *and* her current lover back home, than either is with her. The naked trio now wades ashore, animatedly disagreeing en route to their towel-spread lounge chairs as to whether the several American and two Italian members of their unacknowledged topless sorority will presently join them in bottomlessness or whether the not-unhandsome Mexican security guard at the resort's perimeter (who has plainly observed but so far chosen to ignore their rule-flouting) will feel moved to nip this escalation in the bud, so to speak.

Jacqueline Masson supposes that she'll become accustomed to the horrid emptiness of her present life and gradually fill it with other interests. Just now, however, she is so bored with its pointlessly ongoing story that she wishes she could simply close and toss it like a tiresome book—the way that sexy American girl, at the moment the women pass, tosses her paperback onto the sand beside the molded-plastic beach chair in which she has been lolling like Venus on the half shell, pulls her Oakland A's baseball cap down over her face, and rests her head on her upraised arms, lifting her perfect breasts as if to make them declare, "Here we are, guys; resist us if you can."

[redacted]hat *as if* is not Mme. Masson's: she takes only the most perfunctory woman-to-woman notice of that brace of maraschino-topped vanilla-sundae specials and then, with her companions, exits this narrative to deal with her unenviable own (while, just offshore, the moderate undercurrent tumbles like a vagrant subtext a certain pair of hot-pink sunglasses along the sandy sea floor, leisurely under the moored Mistral sailboards and Laser sailboats; among the feet of bathers at the central swimming area, marked with floats to warn off water-skiers and windsurfers; thence down-beach toward where another rule-flouter has dragged a lounge chair over the low-fenced bank from the landscaped lawn of the guest compounds down that way). No: those salivary tropes are courtesy of William Allen Wentworth III, American teenager for the four months remaining till his twentieth birthday, for whom the spectacle of three middle-aged French or French-Canadian (anyhow, French-speaking) women wading merrily naked from the gentle surf merely makes more delectable the *Playboy*-centerfoldworthy blonde in orange bikini pants and Oakland A's cap, off whom he has scarcely been able to take his eyes for the past three quarters of an hour. Praise God for sunglasses, which permit one shamelessly to ogle those Häagen-Dazs double scoops from thirty feet away while pretending to draft a letter to one's parents, back in Cincinnati, Ohio, explaining why, after a prolonged soul-search, one has decided to drop out of the University of Virginia in one's sophomore year in order—after a bit of R&R south of the border on the last of one's "college" inheritance from Grandpa Bill—to pursue what one is all but certain now is one's true calling: the management not of Wentworth Office Systems, Inc., the half-century-old family firm, but of sound-and-light effects for heavy-metal rock concerts. Although he shares the lanky build and troubled facial complexion of those rowdy Yank youngsters tut-tutted by Mme. Masson, likewise their unseasoned mien and their currently de rigueur uniform of clunky black basketball shoes (unlaced), long baggy shorts, oversized T-shirt, and backward ball cap, Bill Three is a polite and rather shy boy, actually, indifferently successful with girls, more at ease with the unambiguous signal lamps, switches, and meters of an electronic console than with the complexly voltaged interactions of his peers. He has had his eye increasingly on Ms. February (so he can't help thinking of the awesome blonde in the Oakland A's cap) since her arrival yesterday—Bill himself is three days into his unauthorized vacation—and has spent most of today virtually stalking her, so taken is he with her physical beauty and, more and more, with the way she handles herself. Among his impressions:

• As "American" as she looks (to William the Third, this adjective still reflexively connotes white-Anglo derivation, al-

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End of the Migration Era—Time for a Moratorium

If the grass is always greener on the other side, then a quick glance at our daily papers tells us that, for an awful lot of people worldwide, the grass they covet grows in the United States. Never before in the history of this nation have so many people wanted to move here. Never before have we faced so many difficult choices in deciding who, out of millions of basically nice folks, we will allow to enter. A storm is brewing. The differential pressure inside and outside our borders has left the nation vulnerable to unregulated surges of people seeking our shores.

This acute pressure can only grow in intensity. Any loophole in our immigration processes, any opportunity for exploitation or illegal border crossing, will produce uncontrolled waves of immigrants. This may seem hard to believe, but recently, the United Nations named 17 countries as "potential Somalias," or nations that could face collapse, including Mexico, Egypt, Nigeria and Algeria. In each nation or region, we see similar phenomena—a breakdown of civil order and a large, growing, poorly-educated and dissatisfied population in danger of starvation. Civil war, separatist movements, generalized civil and social breakdown—each produce large refugee flows.

Why do we need immigration?

- **Do we need more people? Are we underpopulated?**
- **Is there an acute labor shortage in the U.S.?**
- **Are the water tables in Florida, California and Texas flooded?**
- **Is there an excess of prime farmland in America?**
- **Is there too much wildlife in our national parks?**
- **Is there an overabundance of beach front property to be developed?**
- **Do we need immigration to improve public education?**
- **Do we need immigration to reduce crime in America?**
- **Do we need immigration to improve medical care?**
- **Are there too many acres of wetlands in need of paving?**
- **Are we too homogeneous to be a legitimate nation?**
- **Does our national security depend, in any way, on significant immigration?**

FAIR believes the answer to each of these questions is no. If we don't need immigration, why have it? The answer seem to be perceived tradition and habit. Is this how we want to form national policies?

Polls show most Americans want immigration reduced, and FAIR thinks the nation could use a moratorium or "time-out" on immigration for a while.

We must have a better plan in the future. We must have a better understanding now. We need to understand that the age when international migration could solve human problems is over for the overwhelming majority of mankind. Our role must be to try to help people improve conditions where they are, within our capacity as a nation. If we and the other developed nations are to control our own destinies and respective national security, then we must recognize that most people around the world will have to "bloom where they're planted."

by Dan Stein, Executive Director

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though he certainly knows better and gets along quite agreeably with his peers of other ethnicity), her name has an exotic, sort of Middle Eastern sound in his ears, at least as it's pronounced by the Chef du Village and other GOs with whom he has seen her speaking animatedly from time to time, both in English and in French: Jedee, Zhedí, something like that.

• Like himself, she's unaccompanied. She has doubtless been assigned a roommate, as has he (Bill scarcely sees his from one day to the next), but she prefers to move about on her own. He has observed her, more gregarious and athletic than himself, playing power volleyball on the beach (she sets up a mean spike), dancing energetically at the disco, and laughing and chatting with the GOs and her fellow GMs (Gentils Membres) in the buffet-style main restaurant. Nevertheless, she appears to be essentially content with her own company: Bill takes it as a mark of their shared independent-spiritedness that while most of their coevals lounge sociably about at poolside between activities, Zhedí, like him, prefers the uncrowded far end of the beach. As enchanting as is her meticulous sun-lotioning of that perfect body, as yet untanned, in his opinion she is not displaying herself to encourage approach; she's simply taking the sun, reading and communing with herself between sessions of physical and social activity. He admires that, and also the unaffected friendliness of her conversation awhile ago with the similarly topless and not at all bad-looking Italian or Latino woman nearby, whose handsome brown-nippled jugs the young man classifies as more coffee-almond-fudge than vanilla; Ms. Feb evidently doesn't regard other attractive females ipso facto as rivals. Bill's sense of her, moreover—he'll readily grant that here his imagination is running free—is that she herself goes topless not out of exhibitionism (like that older, French trio) but simply for the pleasures of nonrestraint and, perhaps, unaggressive nonconformity.

• She has, withal, has Ms. Zhedí/Jedee/Whatever, an air of unassuming self-possession and general maturity for her age that young B Three (as his Virginia musician friends call him) finds almost as impressive as her lovely face and magnificent near-nude body; her refreshing absence of affectation both encourages and intimidates him. He guesses she's a year or two older than he is, and feels that differential as acutely as he used to back in high school days. Could she possibly find him interesting? Just possibly, he decides: in a freshman-year computer-science class at UVA he was befriended by a girl less striking than Ms. February but quite good-looking all the same, who actually asked *him* out before he could ask her; they had "related" with an ease and reciprocal interest unprecedented in his experience, and might well have gotten it on as a couple if he hadn't still been honorably carrying a torch for Karen Baker, his high school girlfriend (who turned out to be already involved with another guy, at her own university, in Vermont).

At exactly this juncture in our narrative, Chance presents William Allen Wentworth III with a chance indeed to test this possibility. As the three topless—and now bottomless!—French-speaking ladies emerged laughing from the surf and strolled past Zhedí en route to their beach chairs, she casually dropped her paperback onto the sand beside her, lay back in her own chair, pulled her ball cap down over her face, and tucked her hands behind her head, with the aforenoted salivary effect on the observer. A breeze now ruffles the leaves of that book and blows a loose page free of it, almost directly toward our Bill; he tosses aside his clipboard with the half-drafted letter of explanation to his parents, piles out of his lounge chair, and makes a diving interception before the precious leaf can flutter past him down the beach and maybe into the water.

Gotcha! he exults to himself. He brushes sand from his shorts, restraightens his cap (Cincinnati Reds, a different league altogether from Oakland's; they might discuss that), carefully uncrumples the shortstopped paper, and considers how best to head for first base. Neither Ms. F. nor the Italian/Latino woman nor the Frenchies appear to have noticed his flurry of action. His impulse is straightforwardly to return the book page—"Excuse me, ma'am; this is yours, I think"—and, depending on her reaction, take it from there. That's how his buddy Fred Sims, drummer and backup singer with Cold Fusion, back in Charlottesville, and cocksman extraordinaire, would do it: "If she doesn't cover her tits when you say hello," Fred would advise him, "you're home free, man." On the other hand, it might make better sense to wait until she puts her top back on before approaching her: "Didn't want to bother you while you were catching the rays," et cetera (wink, wink). He bets she'd appreciate his thoughtfulness.

To gather his nerve and consider his options, he returns to his chair, smooths the page out on his clipboard, and scans it; some idea of what she's reading might give him a good opener. Although B Three himself reads next to nothing, as a rule, except from video-display terminals, and did poorly in his college literature courses (which anyhow had more to do with ethnic and gender politics than with art), and although he takes for granted that what isn't electronic isn't relevant, except maybe historically, he has from time to time enjoyed specimens of science fiction and "cyberpunk"; maybe he and she can discuss that. From his monitoring of Zhedí/Jedee, he can't hazard a guess at her taste in books—but then, neither his life experience nor his imagination affords him much sense of the range of possibilities, either in literature or in the reading proclivities of young women.

Out of context, at least, neither side of pp. 123–124 (so the leaf is numbered on its upper outboard corners) makes much sense to its present reader. A more knowledgeable and perceptive eye than B Three's might register that since the leaf's recto (123) happens to conclude one chapter of or selection from the overall text, and the verso (124) therefore to begin another, the title of the book itself—which would normally appear as a running head on the left-hand, even-numbered

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page—is missing; and further, that inasmuch as no author's name appears under the (unnumbered) title of the item commencing on 124, the unnamed book must consist of articles, stories, or whatever by a single (unnamed) hand rather than by various authors. Neither a novel page on the one hand, then (if it's fiction at all), nor an anthology page on the other. What Bill registers is simply that the three lines constituting page 123 (under the running subhead *Stories of Our Lives*) read less like fiction than like. . .Bill can't say what. "rolls it lightly seaward," the page begins in mid-sentence, ending some paragraph from the page before. The next paragraph, a pair of rhetorical fragments, reads "Rwanda, Haiti, Bosnia, Kurdistan. The doomed Marsh Arabs." And the one after that, "The web of the world."

Over his head.

Page 124 is more promising, perhaps because it opens a missing text rather than closing one. "Any line at all can start a story," it begins (under the title "Once Upon a Time"); to which proposition some girl, it seems, replies, "Oh?"; to which reply the guy ("Sheila's new lover," he's called a few lines later) responds, in effect, "Take the line 'Any line at all,' et cetera, and hang it between quotes as a line of dialogue, and what you get is something like 'Any line at all,' Sheila's new lover declared to her on the balcony of her parents' condo in Perdido Key, Florida, where the couple had run off together for a long autumn weekend and were currently lounging naked in mid-October morning sunlight, 'can start a story,' and off we go."

Cool, Bill agrees, impressed; but then, he's disposed to be impressed by anything associated with Ms. Zhedí-Feb over yonder, who has risen yet a notch higher in his estimation. Brains, too!

"*Bonjour*, Zhayr*dee*!" he hears called now in a rich baritone (he hadn't noticed the *r* sound in her name before, actually overriding the *d*), and there's stocky, sun-browned, black-curled Marcel, the much-muscled and high-spirited Chef du Village, in his round-lensed, wire-rimmed specs, his shell necklace, and the bikini swim-briefs that he and all the other non-American GOs prefer to boxer trunks, not to mention knee-length "jams."

"*Bonjour*, Marcel," Ms. Feb replies smoothly, once she has lifted her cap to see who's saluting her. Just as smoothly, as Mar-*sayl* hunkers beside her chair to exchange pleasantries (he patrols the beach twice daily, Bill has observed, socializing with the GMs), she fetches from behind her back the orange bra of her swimsuit and unhurriedly dons it. Bye-bye, sweet Häagen-Dazzlers.

"You weel be on ze red *team* in tomorrow's games, okay?" Marcel amiably proposes, and displays a handful of the colored-yarn wristbands used to distinguish the competing teams in the club's weekly "Olympics."

"*S'il vous plait*," Zhayrdee replies in pert and perfectly accented French—so it sounds to B Three, at least. Then she adds, in her pure network American, "Wherever I'm needed."

"Red *team*," Marcel affirms. "We meet at ze volley*ball* at ten o'clock, okay?"

"*Entendu*." She obligingly extends her right wrist for banding, and with her left hand adjusts her hair while the Chef du Village ties on the red yarn. The pair then chat awhile further in French, less jocularly (she even shows him what she's reading, and Marcel makes Gallic exclamations of approval), before bidding each other a cordial au revoir.

The heart of William Allen Wentworth III is stirred by an emotion complex and potentially dangerous to his self-esteem. He understands not a word of the pair's conversation, nor would he have if it had been in any language other than his own. For perhaps the first time, it occurs to him that it would be desirable—that it would be, in very truth, more *cool*—if such were not the case; if he could converse easily, animatedly, and seriously with people of backgrounds other than his. It is not, finally, difficult for him to acknowledge that a fellow like himself doesn't stand a snowball's chance in hell with Ms. February, not simply because she's almost movie-star gorgeous but because she is (evidently) knowledgeable, sophisticated, and serious as well as "fun-loving"—in every way superior to anyone he has ever dated or been at all close to, the Virginia computer-science girl included. It is quite another matter, however, for him to see in another light, as now he dimly begins to, how "a fellow like himself" must appear to the likes of Zhayrdee and Marcel. When and if that light becomes clearer, he may chasteningly understand that real cool consists in impressive competencies together with firm principles and a degree of worldliness—that is to say, in capability, character, and polish—rather than in any particular costume and attitude; that to the excellent likes of Zhayrdee, nothing could be less cool than to be cool by his and Fred Sims's standards; that, in fact, he probably appears to her ridiculous: a clown, a creep.

"Red *team*?" Marcel is cheerfully asking him now, having resumed his tour of the beach.

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"Nah, I guess not."

"You don't want to play? Is just for fun, okay?"

What a dork he thinks I am, thinks wretched Bill, who lamely smiles and says again, "Guess not, thanks."

"So," the Chef du Village says with a shrug, already scanning down the line. "May*be* you change your mind later, okay?" To the Italian or Latino woman he now calls, "Red *team*?" She flashes teasingly at him her blue wrist-yarn and calls something back in what sounds to Bill like Italian but might as well be Greek. Marcel replies animatedly in the same tongue and goes to hunker beside *her* lounge chair; the woman doesn't even bother to cover her chocolate-kiss breasts.

Zhayrdee, Bill glumly observes, has gone back to her book.

For reasons that he is barely equipped to analyze, W.A.W. III will not much enjoy the remainder of his truant holiday. He'll mail to Cincinnati a version of his dropout letter and return to Charlottesville just in time to join Cold Fusion for an extended gig in Chapel Hill and another in Durham before the band disbands over a feud between drummer and bassist on the one hand and lead guitarist and female vocalist-tambourinist on the other. Thereafter he'll make his way across the United States of America and back with Fred Sims, picking up random work here and there for a couple of years and eventually mending fences with his indulgent parents. In his mid-twenties he'll enter the family business after all, marry and sire children upon some clone of Karen Baker, and devote the decent balance of his life to his family and to Wentworth Office Systems, Inc.—which enterprise, however, will not prosper under his uninspired stewardship. In years to come he'll remember his abortive road tour with Cold Fusion as being, in its way, the most satisfying episode in his entire listless life story. Although his recollection of it decades hence will include his bolting the university and his Cancún escapade, he will not recall his uncharacteristic stalking and ogling of young Ms. Geraldine "Gerri" Fraser, of Palo Alto, California—with whom, really, he has next to nothing in common beyond WASP ethnicity and U.S. citizenship. He slumps back into his beach chair, crumples into a ball the sibylline page that was to have been their link, sidearms it onto the sand, pulls his Cincinnati Reds cap over his face, and for a considerable while stares wide-eyed and soul-troubled at its convergent seams and evenly spaced ventilation grommets.

[redacted]s. Fraser—B.S. Stanford, summa cum laude, and currently a second-year student at the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions—may happen to have the face and figure of *Playboy*'s centerfold of the month, but from kindergarten to the present she has undeviatingly aspired to follow in the professional footsteps of her mother and father, an endocrinologist and an obstetrician/gynecologist respectively. An accomplished all-round athlete and a serious amateur cellist, she has yet to choose her medical specialty; at age twelve it was pediatrics, at fifteen cardiology. Her love of scientific research inclines her toward a Ph.D. in medicine rather than a straight M.D.; on the other hand, her strong social conscience urges her toward clinical practice. The book to which she has returned is *Médicins sans frontières*, about the international volunteer physicians' organization thus named, devoted to heroic relief work in Somalia and similarly catastrophized venues; Gerri hopes to serve in that capacity for a year or two after her residency and before embarking on a career of medical research, private practice, or some combination of the two. Although she has lost her bookmark (a page that her current, Baltimore boyfriend, a graduate-student apprentice poet at the university's Homewood campus, obligingly ripped from some postmodernist story collection that he happened to be perusing when Gerri casually asked him, as the pair were reading in bed, for something with which to mark her place while they made love), she knows quite well where she is, in the *Médicins* book and generally.

Has she even noticed the oddly dressed young fellow with the semi-punk haircut who's been following her about ever since she checked in to the resort, at her parents' urging, for a bit of respite from her workaholism? She has, marginally: he reminds her, a little, of her kid brother back at Stanford, a preppie at heart who however feels compelled to ruffle the parental feathers by flirting with the punk subculture. They all know that Derek will outgrow such affectations; meanwhile, he takes their teasing good-humoredly.

That Mexican security guard, the lineaments of whose impassive face are directly descended from those that inspired the Mayan sculptors of dread Chacmool . . .

That topless young Bolognesa, a stewardess for Alitalia who aspires to be a travel agent in Rome, or perhaps in Milan . . .

The embryo, its existence unknown to both of its parents, busily and quietly multiplying its cells in Barbara Ellison's uterus . . .

Gerri Fraser's ex-lover back in Palo Alto, whose ball cap she keeps as a souvenir of that pleasant life episode, although she has switched allegiance to the Orioles and to her new poet friend, and prefers soccer to baseball anyhow . . .

Franco the senior art historian, just now masturbating pensively before the draperied window of his condominium overlooking the university's lacrosse field, where the women's varsity squad is working out. Mimi Adler's subtextual smile and narrative-ontological question. That Canadian quarter, still unretrieved from the campus grass. That balled-up book page on the Club Med beach, slowly unballing itself now by the force of its own resiliency, like a time-lapse movie of a sprouting mushroom, until another breeze catches it and rolls it lightly seaward.

Rwanda, Haiti, Bosnia, Kurdistan. The doomed Marsh Arabs.

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Dwight Eisenhower and Bernard Montgomery

by NANCY CALDWELL SOREL

CONVINCED of his own infallibility, General Bernard Montgomery was a difficult man—a bully, some said. He was tactless and nearly friendless among his peers, although his troops were devoted to him. General Dwight Eisenhower had almost nothing but friends and (having grown up a poor kid in Kansas) little concept of troops that were not his peers.

In May of 1942, in Britain to size up the war situation, Eisenhower made an appointment with Montgomery, who was in command of southern England, after field maneuvers one afternoon. General Mark Clark, who accompanied Ike, recalled that Monty arrived very late and was all business, turning his back to analyze that day's exercise and point out troop positions on a map. Ike lit his customary cigarette. "Who's smoking?" Monty barked without turning around. "I am, sir," Ike said. "Stop it," Monty said. "I don't permit it here." It was like being back in the schoolroom in Abilene, and Ike, red-faced, stamped out the cigarette. Monty concluded his presentation. "Sorry to be so abrupt," he said, and he shook hands and left.

That meeting proved one of their least contentious. Later Montgomery was promoted to field marshal, but it was Eisenhower who became Allied Supreme Commander. Monty continued to lecture his now boss, and to snipe at Ike for his perceived shortcomings as a combat strategist and tactician. What to Eisenhower was democratic consultation with all his generals, Montgomery saw as an inability to grasp the obvious—that the only logical battle plan was his own. And what to Monty was concern with proper precautionary measures to Ike was an obstinate refusal to enter the fray until every potential obstacle had been dealt with.

Then, too, Montgomery, basking in his glorification by the British press, was wont to imply that all battles won were won by him. The Americans were disgusted, and Ike had no easy task to keep the Allies allied. Monty's arrogance survived the war unabated. Once asked to name history's three greatest generals, he replied, "The other two were Alexander the Great and Napoleon."

Illustration by Edward Sorel

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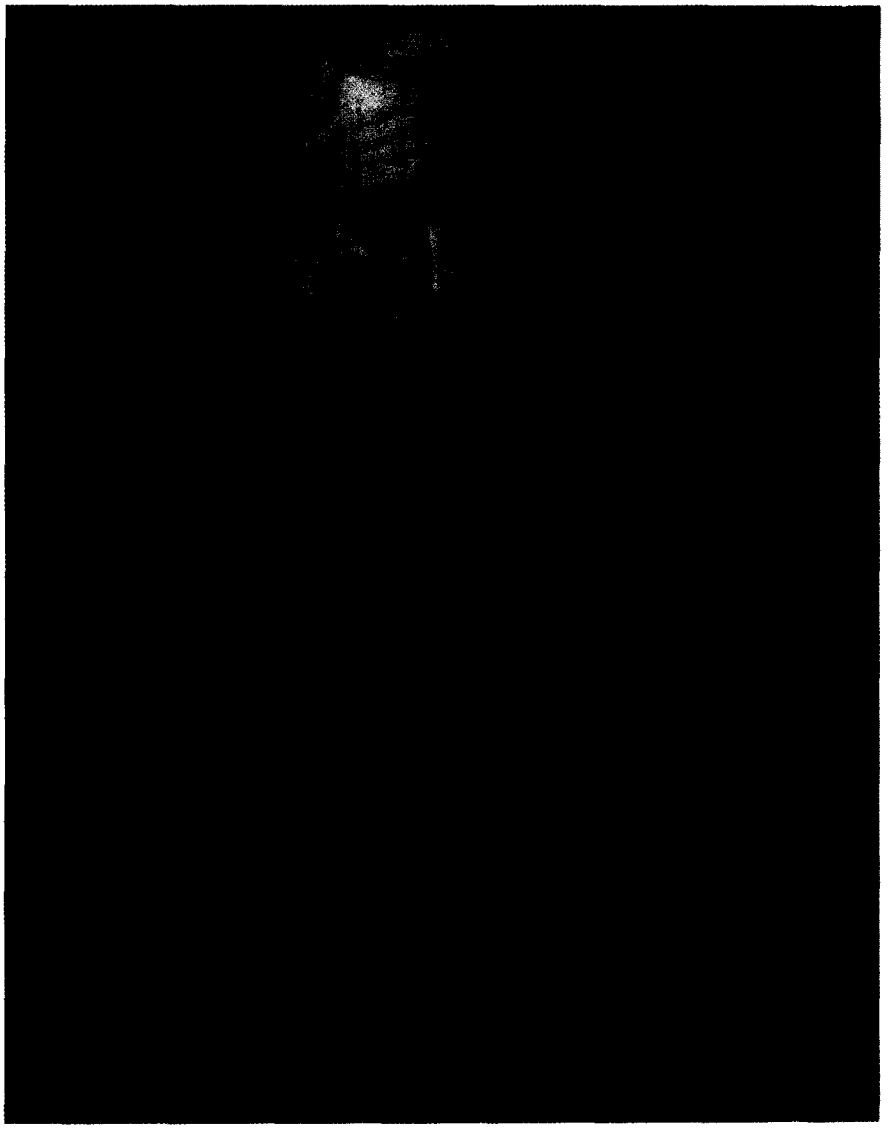

Infection

Stephen Sondheim's Passion *was more than most Broadway showgoers want from a musical*

by Francis Davis

"I'M so happy, / I'm afraid I'll die / Here in your arms. / What would you do / If I died / Like this— / Right now, / Here in your arms?"

So begins the first of many songs of love and death in *Passion*, the composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim's third collaboration with the writer and director James Lapine, following *Sunday in the Park With George* (1984) and *Into the Woods* (1987). The show, which closed on Broadway last January, after 280 performances, was based on the Italian director Ettore Scola's 1981 film *Passione d'Amore*, although Sondheim and Lapine also drew from Scola's original source—Iginio Ugo Tarchetti's *Fosca*, an autobiographical gothic published in 1869, the year of Tarchetti's death from tuberculosis and typhus at the age of twenty-nine. All three versions of the tale, which is as much a vampire story without a caped antichrist as it is a meditation on the nature of romantic love, take place toward the end of the Risorgimento, in a newly unified Italy at peace after two decades of war.

Passion survives on CD, the format in which it will inspire arguments for years to come, although there will surely be many other productions. On stage the musical begins with a handsome young soldier and his beautiful mistress in bed together nude, tangled in postcoital bliss as they sing the duet quoted above (called "Happiness" on the Angel cast album, CDQ 7243 5 55251 23). Clara, who in the New York production was played by Marin Mazzie, is so happy she could die; Giorgio, played by Jere Shea, agrees that theirs isn't "another simple love story." Neither is the show, although it starts off like one.

On CD as on the stage, *Passion* includes no overture, nor is one needed. Military drumming followed by a stab of dissonance—what I think of as a "blood" chord—and a creeping three-note vamp reminiscent of Sondheim's music for *Sweeney Todd* blend into Giorgio and Clara's mutual declaration of love, which, with its harmonic deviations and sudden changes of tempo, foreshadows practically every subsequent number. That vamp —technically a "pedal point," or sustained notes in the bass register that remain the same while the harmonies around them change—is as sure a sign of unrest as the second *S* in *Passion*'s elegant red logo, which is reversed and joined to the first at the down curve. The tops of the letters form both a valentine heart and a mirror image, suggestive of love as something potentially aberrant, twisted, narcissistic. The lyric to this opening number works in much the same way as the music—as a sort of premonition. This will be the last song in which an allusion to death is understood to be figurative.

We find out later (too much later, perhaps) that Clara is unhappily married but

Illustrations by C. F. Payne

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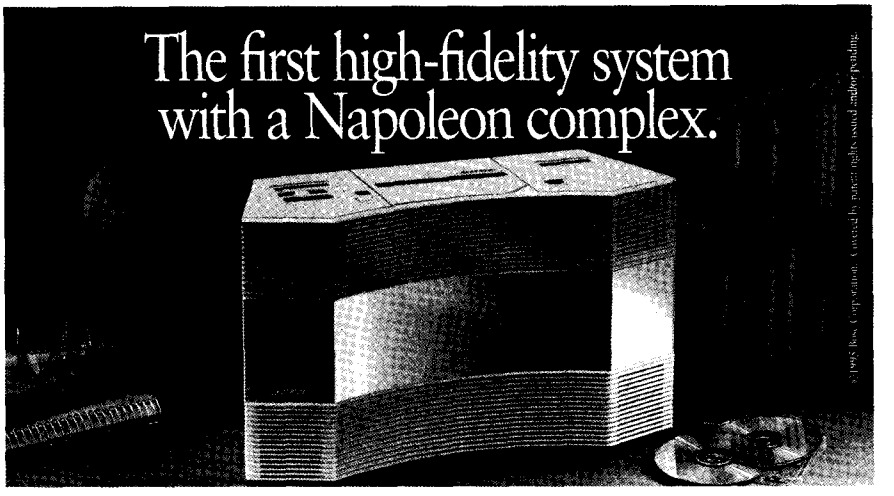
unwilling to leave her husband, because under nineteenth-century Italian law to do so would mean relinquishing custody of her little boy. This isn't the only thing keeping her and Giorgio apart. The luckless Giorgio, a captain decorated for saving the life of a fellow soldier on the battlefield, has received orders transferring him from Milan to a no longer threatened garrison in a provincial town in the northern mountains. This is where he falls prey to Fosca, his commanding officer's plain and sickly cousin, a hysteric already half in the grave. Giorgio's imagination and sensitivity set him apart from the camp's other soldiers, and Fosca recognizes him as a kindred spirit on the basis of these very qualities. "They hear drums, we hear music," she sings to him at one point; and though her outburst alludes to those military cadences that open the show, the fevered rhythmic pattern to which her words are set echoes Giorgio's earlier declaration of his and Clara's "love that fuses two into one." According to Tarchetti's translator, Lawrence Venuti, the author himself served as an officer in the Italian army and was romantically involved with both a married woman and the epileptic cousin of his company commander.

Fosca shamelessly clutches at Giorgio, so obsessed that she pursues him without thought of humiliation. As many in the audience were, Giorgio is appalled by her manipulativeness and self-pity. Even so, he finds himself drawn to her, eventually concluding that her love for him—love "as pure as breath, as permanent as death, implacable as stone," in the words of the show's most haunting song—is superior in kind to any he has ever known: specifically, Clara's.

Fosca wins Giorgio's heart by convincing him that she would die for him. Someone hearing the CD for the first time, and unfamiliar with Tarchetti's novel or Scola's movie, might sneer that this isn't much of a sacrifice, given that Fosca is near death anyway. You need to read *Fosca* (available in English as *Passion*, in the recent translation by Lawrence Venuti) in order to comprehend that a night of abandoned lovemaking will kill her.

CONTEMPORARY drama can be a teacher and his female student on opposite sides of a desk (David Mamet's *Oleanna*), or three men chained to a wall



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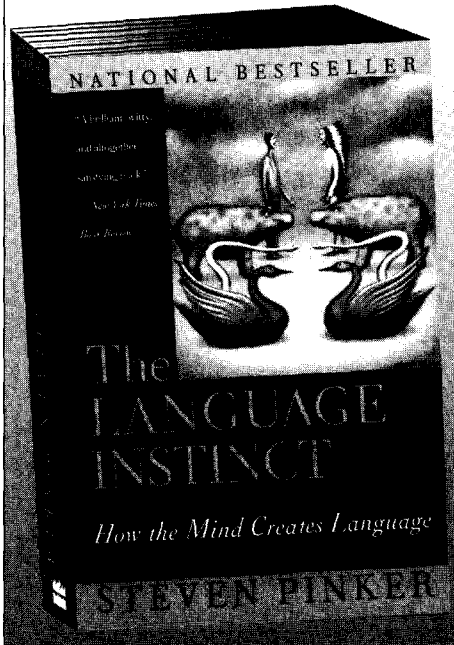

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(Frank McGuinness's *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*), but musicals are admired for leaving nothing to the imagination. The most popular of them are feasts of conspicuous consumption, with the salient talking point for audiences being the cost of tickets in relation to the size of the chorus line and the immensity of the sets and special effects.

Passion's only chorus line was a Greek chorus of uniformed soldiers who, marching in tight formation, misinterpreted Giorgio's motives in being kind to Fosca. Its primary sets were Adrianne Lobel's muted backdrops and scrims, which, an art historian friend of mine pointed out, were possibly intended to evoke the Macchiaioli, a school of mid-nineteenth-century Italian impressionists. This is a chamber musical, in which a voluptuous actress who bares her breasts in the opening scene and thereafter sings the texts of her lover's letters while wearing a succession of elaborate and brightly colored period hoopskirts and bustles is upstaged by an actress in drab, colorless dresses to her ankles, with a large wart glued to her face and her hair drawn back in a spinster's bun. Tarchetti's real-life model for Fosca was an epileptic. Skin and bones in an era in which obesity was a badge of both prosperity and health, the novel's Fosca might today be considered anorectic. What ails the musical's Fosca is never specified: described by the camp physician as "a kind of medical phenomenon, a collection of many ills," she seems to be suffering from generic nineteenth-century-woman's disease—she faints a lot and is given to emotional outbursts. She's supposed to be hideously ugly, but the woman on stage in the New York production was no worse than homely. If this had been Andrew Lloyd Webber, there might at least have been a show-stopping prosthesis.

Passion opened last May to mixed reviews, some of them frankly antipathetic. It received four Tony Awards, including one as the season's best new musical, though many in the theatrical community gossiped that this top honor was bestowed grudgingly and against not much competition. The show was a "hit" only in that it enjoyed a comparatively long run, in part because it was relatively inexpensive to stage.

Sondheim has described his score for *Passion* as "one long love song, one long

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rhapsody," and the show in its entirety—two hours long, with no intermission, no breaks for applause between numbers, and no postmodernist winking by the actors at the expense of their characters—as "a large one-act," "an opera in attitude," and "the world's first humorless musical." Ten years ago, when *Sunday in the Park With George* was new, Sondheim was frequently likened to the painter Georges Seurat, the show's protagonist, whose immersion in his canvases distanced him from the other characters in much the same way that Sondheim has increasingly distanced himself from Broadway audiences.

Such are the demands that *Passion* makes on an audience—not just willing suspension of disbelief but also undivided attention to a score that circles back on itself endlessly—that Sondheim could also be likened to Fosca, who unreasonably demands Giorgio's love. To judge from the two audiences I saw it with last summer, there could have been a sign dangling from that reversed *S* on the Plymouth Theatre's marquee trumpeting *Passion* as THE NEW HIT MUSICAL NOBODY LIKES!

THIS wouldn't be completely true, of course, because there are many who admire the show immensely, including me. Sondheim's champions see him as Broadway's last remaining link to the grand songwriting traditions of George Gershwin and Jerome Kern. Some of us, again including me, regard him as this country's greatest active composer, regardless of genre. I'm not one of those people who adore everything he does, and *Passion* hardly strikes me as his richest score. It lacks *Company*'s satiric vitality, *Sweeney Todd*'s bigness and wicked cackle, the ill-fated *Merrily We Roll Along*'s bounty of memorable songs. But coming as it does after the ostentatious *Sunday in the Park With George* and the trivial *Into the Woods* and *Assassins*, it at least marks a return to form. A double paradox in that it's a period musical whose characters express opera-sized emotions conversationally, in lyrics as spare and direct as any its composer has ever set to music, *Passion* also achieves an ideal that Sondheim has been pursuing with varying success at least since *Company*—that of the Broadway score as a kind of symphony of voices, an integrated work in which individual songs are anagrammatic movements.

Sondheim has said as much. "To me, it's important that a score be not just a series of songs—that it should in some way be developed, just the way [a show's] book is," he told Stephen Schiff in a *New Yorker* profile published in 1993, when *Passion* was still in the planning stages. The most frequent complaint against Sondheim is that audiences don't leave the theater humming his melodies, the way they did Gershwin's and Kern's. Sondheim—who was Oscar Hammerstein II's protégé but who also studied with the "serious" composer Milton Babbitt, the author of a 1958 article variously published as "The Composer as Specialist" and "Who Cares If You Listen?"—has often gone to extremes to ensure that audiences won't hum the show on the way to the exits.

The way to get an audience to do that, as Sondheim has caustically observed in more than one interview, is to reprise ad infinitum throughout your show. The loveliest song in *Merrily We Roll Along* was "Good Thing Going," which was reprised immediately—only to be drowned out by jabbering partygoers.

Passion discourages humming along in quite another way. John Simon, in a review in *New York* magazine, complained that all the songs in the score sound alike. Heard on CD, they do, and therein lies both their integrity and the root of the problem that theatergoers and reviewers had with them.

The songs are so much of a piece thematically that it's difficult even for someone like me, who saw the show more than once and practically memorized the CD, to sing a few bars of one of them—literally or in the mind's ear—without hearing another two or three intrude. (Not that it's ever easy to extract a Sondheim melody from its harmonic crisscross, anyway—melody is his equivalent of Henry James's figure in the carpet.) No matter how taken you might be with them on first hearing, these songs don't replay themselves in your head for the next few hours. They're part of a score that gets under your skin. This is almost a metaphor for a show in which one of the char-

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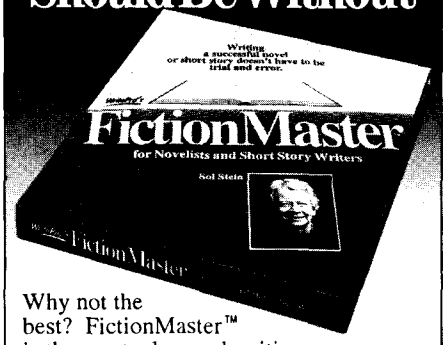

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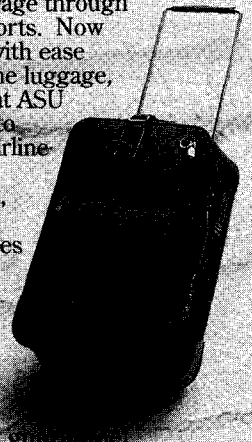

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acters virtually infects another with her love: Giorgio's attitude toward Fosca changes only after he contracts a fever as a result of carrying her unconscious body back to the garrison in the rain, when he could have left her to die.

SONDHEIM'S melodies, no less than his lyrics, evolve out of character and situation. Yet in his shows music clearly takes precedence over everything else, including story. Sondheim tends to be the favorite Broadway composer of those of us for whom a show is finally only as good as its score, and because he's such an effective dramatist in his own right, his shows lose remarkably little on their cast albums. The *Passion* compact disc differs from most in not having a few seconds of silence encoded between bands; as in the theater, where applause after songs was actively discouraged, nothing is permitted to disrupt the show's alternating moods of intellectual contemplation and romantic swoon.

The disc actually improves on the show in one way: Jonathan Tunick's orchestration of Sondheim's score is fuller and more vibrant as a result of two dozen additional strings. Yet the moment on the disc that best captures the show's peculiar, dreamlike visual atmosphere features just woodwinds—what sounds like a trio of them—playing gaunt and wishful triads that begin a song titled "I Wish I Could Forget You." This figure, heard fleetingly throughout the score, frequently underneath and in counterpoint to another melody, serves as Fosca's theme.

In its utter simplicity more like film music than like a Broadway underscore, the theme here suggests a candle in a curtained room, burning brilliantly but close to the wick's bottom. Weakened by Giorgio's rejection of her, Fosca takes to bed with a fever. At the request of the camp physician, who is conducting what turns out to be a premature deathwatch, Giorgio spends the night in Fosca's room, hoping to comfort her by humoring her. She asks him to take a letter, and though Giorgio blanches when she starts to dictate and he realizes that it is to be a letter from him to her, he reluctantly obeys. The song that follows begins as a duet, but while Fosca sings of what she would have Giorgio feel for her, the only line of hers he echoes is "that doesn't mean I love you" —not the next line, in which Fosca has him wishing he could.

On stage this scene fuses the score's most arresting song with an especially imaginative gambit by Lapine as writer. Faithful to its sources, *Passion* is an epistolary musical: much of the time its three major characters sing letters they're writing or have just received, often in duet or trio and at a physical remove from one another. But this particular letter isn't in the Tarchetti novel, and though Giorgio does write such a letter at Fosca's bidding in the movie, its contents aren't revealed and nothing more is made of it. In *Passion* the letter assumes tremendous importance. Implying a physical intimacy that Giorgio and Fosca haven't yet shared, it winds up in the hands of Fosca's cousin, who challenges Giorgio to a duel. Giorgio is too much the man of honor to tell the colonel the truth, because to do so would confirm that the unlovely Fosca was incapable of arousing such deep and protective feelings in a man.

This is the stuff of melodrama, nothing more. But the song that sets these events in motion lends them emotional resonance, if only because an epistolary musical is quite a different matter from an epistolary novel. *Passion*'s characters literally give voice to one another's thoughts. The letter is an emotional forgery, an utter fabrication. Yet when Fosca, putting words in Giorgio's mouth, has Giorgio realize that her love for him is deeper than any he has ever known, she's displaying an element of telepathy: he'll eventually decide this for himself.

Nothing short of beautiful in its melodic descent, "I Wish I Could Forget You" requires Donna Murphy, as Fosca, to swoop below the staff—a strategy by which Murphy and Sondheim manage to convey the character's shortness of breath while aligning her with seductively husky-voiced movie vamps. The first time I saw *Passion*, I left the theater thinking that there was a bit too much of the Broadway Baby in her singing—an excess of pizzazz at odds with her frail and gasping character. Listening to the

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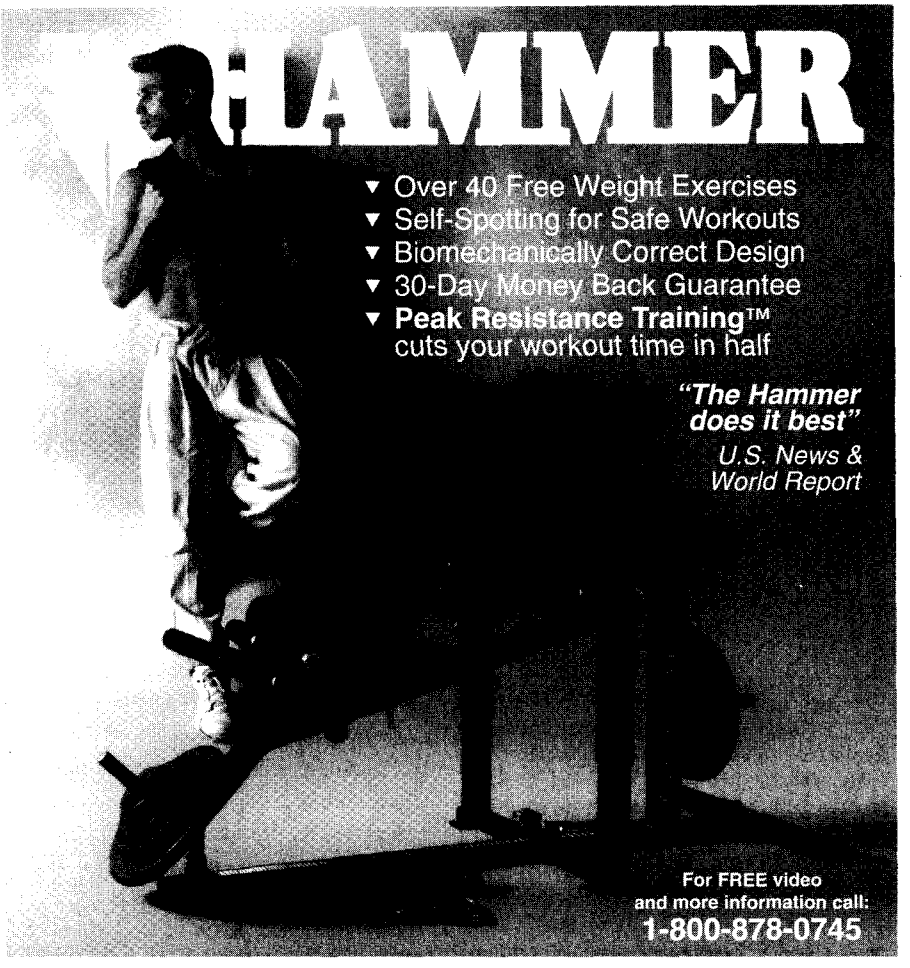
CD, I think I was wrong: the song is Murphy's finest moment. In an earlier song she tells the captain that unlike him, she doesn't read to learn—she reads to live. Fosca is a woman who has experienced most pleasures vicariously, and Sondheim gives her songs that, more than most, require Murphy to merge acting and singing. She portrays Fosca as a woman with a blazing inner life—someone who, in this context, *sings* to live.

THIRTY-FOUR years ago, in Frank Loesser's *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, Robert Morse cunningly performed "I Believe in You" while staring at himself in a mirror. The song, extolling the virtues of "a seeker of wisdom and truth," enjoyed a life outside its show; it's usually interpreted as an up-tempo love song, an ode to an irresistible idealist. Nobody remembers that mirror.

One of the songs Barbra Streisand performed during her HBO special last summer was Sondheim's "Not While I'm Around," which she dedicated to her grown son, who was in the audience. In *Sweeney Todd* this odd lullaby, which begins "Nothing's gonna harm you," was sung to Angela Lansbury by a street urchin powerless to prevent her death or his own. Yet there was nothing amiss in Streisand's motherly reinterpretation, because this is another song removable from its original context. Though it would make a good torch song, I can't imagine Streisand or anybody else singing "I Wish I Could Forget You" away from its show. The problem wouldn't be the lyric's original context. It would be those lines about a love "as permanent as death," and a final verse that begins "And if you die tomorrow," which could not withstand a pronoun change on account of its rhyme scheme.

Fosca tells Giorgio that her "sickness is normal to me, as health is to you." A few days after seeing *Passion* for the second time, I was hospitalized with a 104° temperature, a symptom of what was ultimately diagnosed as a serious bacterial infection. In a situation in which part of my role as a good patient was to monitor my moods and bodily functions and dutifully report even the slightest change, I no longer saw Fosca's morbid self-absorption as quite so absurd.

Fosca's love for Giorgio is supposed to



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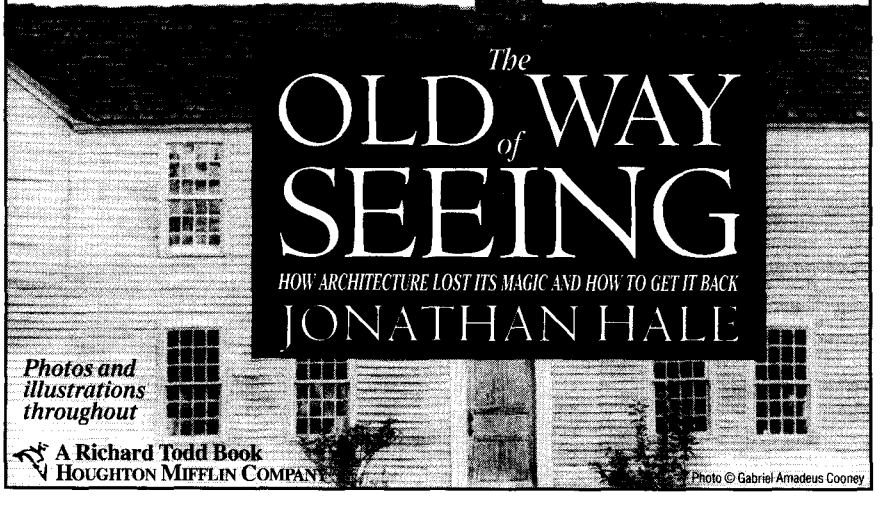

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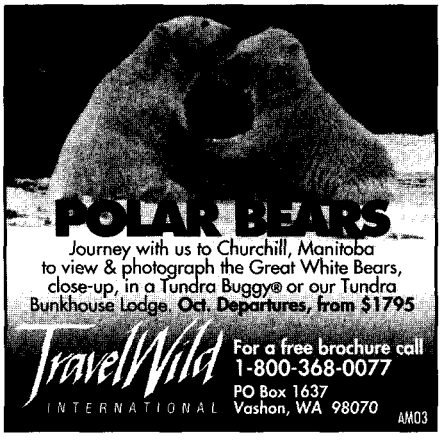

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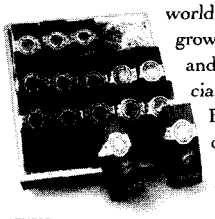

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be superior to Clara's by virtue of not being essentially carnal. What works against this interpretation is that Clara is portrayed much too sympathetically for us to assume that her love is only skin-deep. (Besides which, it would be impossible to find wanting anyone who sings Sondheim as gorgeously as Marin Mazzie does.) At the end, when Giorgio sings of having recognized in Fosca "love without reason, love without mercy, love without pride or shame," you want to shake him and remind him of his earlier question to Fosca: "Is this what you call love? This endless and insatiable smothering . . ." He is merely submitting to Fosca's dementia, and neither he nor the show's creators seem to recognize the difference. Regardless of Sondheim and Lapine's original intentions, the dichotomy represented here is not between soul love and body love but between sickness and health, the unaccountable lure of death and the pang of happiness. On Broadway the pink of Clara's nude flesh in the opening scene contrasted as dramatically with Fosca's coffin pallor as the two women's songs contrast in major and minor keys.

Passion takes place in the world of the sick—not a place Broadway audiences in the mood for uplift particularly want to go. They still want to be told they'll never walk alone. As drama, the show will always be something of a muddle, but it's moving because the score is. New York audiences had trouble accepting Giorgio's final change of heart. It struck them as illogical, and it is—but that's not why they left the theater unsatisfied (who goes to the theater for logic?).

The problem isn't confined to a stage production. It is musical. The song with which Giorgio expresses his love for Fosca isn't ablaze with the rest of the score's sixteenth-note rhythms and sustained chords. It's inorganic. So is "Loving You," the show's big takeout ballad, in which Fosca tells Giorgio that he has become her reason for living. This song, which has Barbra Streisand written all over it, was added to the score at the last minute, in order to make Fosca more sympathetic.

If one responds to *Passion* at all, it is because of Sondheim's music, which is what newcomers will find on CD. Robert Brustein, in his review of the New York production in *The New Republic*, said that he found himself sobbing uncontrollably at the end. I think that the implausible story got to him only because the music did. I was similarly shaken by a new production of *Merrily We Roll Along* last summer, which, despite a limited run, was recorded and recently released on CD (VSD5548). By the final curtain I realized that quite without meaning to, I had conducted my personal life and my career in such a way as to betray both my closest friends and my highest ideals. Then I realized that I had done nothing of the sort; Sondheim's recurring bass figures had rubbed me raw, making me an easy mark for the book's burned-out, middle-aged blues.

More than any of Sondheim's previous shows, *Passion* embraces the concept of the "integrated" or "organic" stage musical—one like *Oklahoma!*, in which songs illuminate character and advance the plot—and takes the next logical step, to the Broadway score as a feat of extended composition. This is the sense in which Sondheim is the greatest heir of Jerome Kern, who attempted something of the same thing in his score for *Show Boat*, though this aspect of the score is often overlooked amid the praise for it as the first show in which music and book served a unified end.

Sondheim's quandary is that such musical innovation is generally lost on today's Broadway audiences, who ask for nothing more from a show (and nothing less!) than vulgar spectacle and a few sentimental melodies; a patina of social consciousness is optional. In "Who Cares If You Listen?" Milton Babbitt recommended as the ideal strategy for the serious composer "voluntary withdrawal from [the] public world to one of private performance and electronic media, with its very real possibility of complete elimination of the social aspects of musical composition." As a composer of vocal music with little taste for grand opera—however much his best scores resemble it—Sondheim is in no position to heed his former mentor's advice. He needs Broadway. What I wonder is if Broadway, which often seems to tolerate him only because it needs the occasional *succès d'estime* in order to go on thinking of itself as a thriving artistic medium, will ever realize how much it needs him. Sondheim and Broadway isn't another simple love story, that's for sure.

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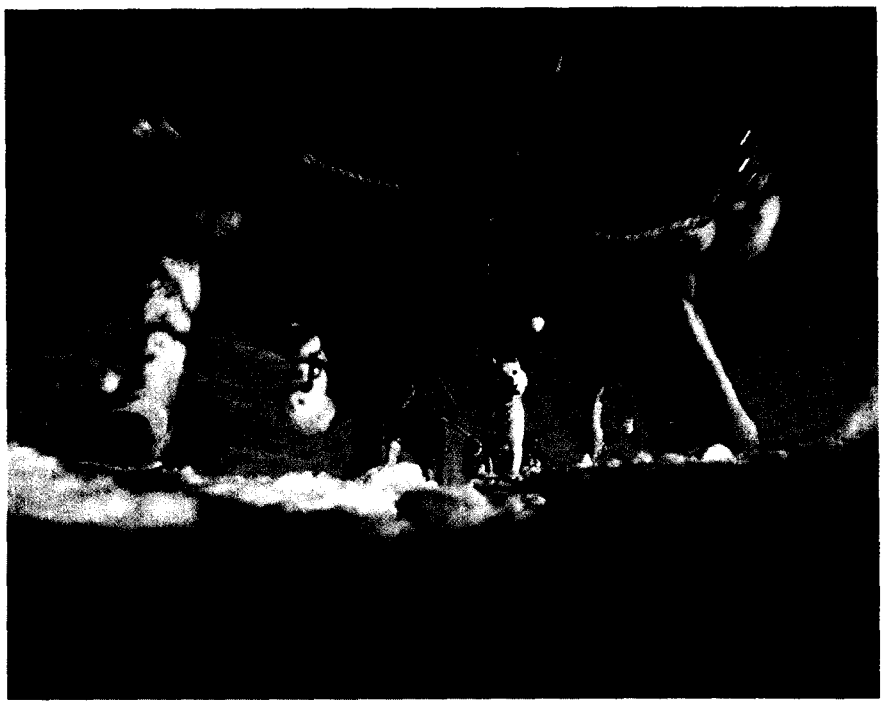

The Perilous Iditarod

Critics say the Iditarod puts sled dogs at needless risk, and that the race should be either halted or significantly modified. But, says the author, the evidence of animal mistreatment is inconclusive

by Mark Derr

EACH winter several dozen mushers and their dog teams compete in the Iditarod Trail International Sled Dog Race, a grueling endurance test for human beings and dogs which covers 1,049 miles of Alaskan wilderness between Anchorage and Nome. It is one of the most egalitarian sporting events in the world—women compete head to head with men, and win. It has grown steadily in size and prestige since its first running, in 1973, and has inspired a worldwide boom in mushing. Its victors, like the five-time winner Rick Swenson and the four-time winner Susan Butcher, have become celebrities.

But with success have come charges of cruelty to animals. Animal-rights groups, recently including the powerful Humane Society of the United States, argue that the Iditarod and similar long-distance races are harmful to the dogs that run them and therefore should be radically reformed, if not abolished. Despite efforts to improve animal care the Iditarod Trail Committee, which governs the race, has failed to mollify critics, and so the sixty-eight mushers scheduled to start from Anchorage on March 4 will carry the burden of proving a negative—that the race is not inherently injurious to their dogs. In significant ways the future of the Iditarod and of competitive mushing rides on the medical results of this year's race.

The Iditarod rewards competitors who maintain a consistent pace through the abbreviated late-winter days and long nights, which they illuminate with headlights attached to their sleds. Snow, ice, and frozen tundra compose the trail. Under optimum conditions—temperatures near freezing, clear skies, and minimal snow cover—top teams complete the course in less than eleven days. Last year Martin Buser, of Big Lake, Alaska, set a new record: ten days, thirteen hours, two minutes, and thirty-nine seconds. Buser believes that he can eventually make the crossing in eight or nine days—a phenomenal feat.

But brutally cold weather (-50° Fahrenheit is not uncommon), deep fresh snow, blizzards, and howling winds that transform snowflakes into projectiles and, when the wind-chill factor is taken into consideration, drop the effective temperature to -100° can turn the race into a battle simply to move forward. Drivers often must break the trail for their animals, an arduous task that slows their progress to a mile an hour or less. Polar-fleece booties and neoprene "wrist-wraps" protect the dogs' feet from the snow and cold, which cause them to freeze, crack, and bleed. The top teams may straggle into Nome after two weeks or more, their spirits and bodies worn.

Buser, who also won in 1992, says he likes to establish a rhythm at the start of the race and to travel an average of ten to fourteen miles an hour as long as weather and trail conditions permit. At that pace the dogs, which consume as many as 10,000 to 11,000 calories a day—65 percent of them from fat—and whose top speed is above twenty miles an hour, are always within their aerobic capacity. Buser runs his dogs for four to five hours and then stops for an equal period, so that they actually race for half of the total time spent on the trail. Rest periods include stops mandated by race organizers: one of twenty-four hours, which can be taken at any point in the race; one of eight hours on the Yukon; and one of eight hours at White Mountain, seventy-seven miles from the finish.

Unlike some competitors, who occasionally run with their teams, especially on ascents, Buser lets the dogs pull him. "I rest ninety-five percent of the time on the [sled's] runners," he says. "My goal is to

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conserve as much energy as possible, because I use most of my energy when the dogs stop." He needs at least three hours to water and feed his dogs, tend to their feet, and bed them down on straw, leaving him an hour or two of rest during most breaks. Buser and other top mushers constantly monitor their dogs, dropping at designated sites animals that are injured or have lost their appetite for food or competition. When an animal comes up lame on the trail, the musher carries it on the sled (as many as four can ride for a short distance) to the nearest checkpoint.

Nap time: a musher beds his team on straw

In spite of such measures dogs regularly are injured or die in the Iditarod. Twenty-one have perished on the trail since 1990; though statistics for years prior to that are not available, fatalities were more common. The causes have varied: moose attack, broken necks, collisions with snowmobiles, heart failure, an exploded liver, and a condition called exertional myopathy. Dozens of other dogs have dropped out owing to sore feet, sprains, fractures, and exhaustion. A human competition with 1,200 participants —the average number of dogs starting the Iditarod—which approached that casualty rate would arouse fierce opposition. And, indeed, animal-rights groups assert that the Iditarod resembles animal abuse more than athletic competition.

Race time: the polar-fleece booties are donned

For years the Iditarod Trail Committee did little to address the issue. In the eyes of some old-time mushers living in Alaska's backcountry, the dogs were expendable beasts of burden, and critics were thought of as interfering outlanders from the Lower Forty-eight. The old-timers welcomed the growing popularity and profitability of their race, but resented the accompanying public scrutiny and demands for greater professionalism.

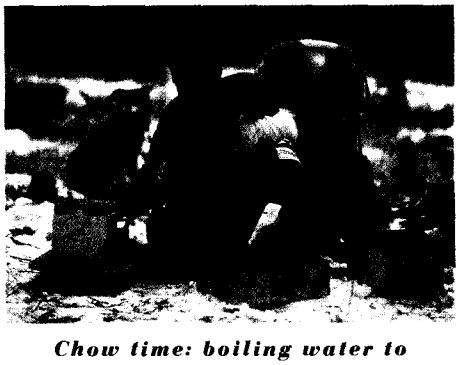
Then, in 1992, after the Humane Society began to monitor the proceedings, the organizers named a tough new chief veterinarian, Karin Schmidt, of the Bering Sea Animal Clinic, in Anchorage. By advising mushers when to drop injured and exhausted dogs from the race, Schmidt set a high standard for animal care and offended a number of veteran competitors. Although the 1992 race had the lowest fatality rate to date—one dog —for political and financial reasons her contract was not renewed.

In 1993 six dogs died; ABC television and Dodge, which had been a major sponsor, decided not to renew their contracts for the race. To retain its other corporate backers, including Timberland, a shoe and outdoor-apparel company, the Iditarod Trail Committee adopted a number of reforms to improve dog care and defuse criticism. David Wills, the Humane Society's vice-president for investigations, was given a seat on a new animal-care committee and effective veto power over the selection of the race veterinarian. Karin Schmidt was rehired. Wills made clear at the time that the goal of the society was to eliminate unnecessary dog deaths, not to provide a public-relations shield for the Iditarod.

Following the race last year, in which one dog died, Wills went on ABC's *Good Morning America* to announce that the Humane Society had decided to oppose the Iditarod, because it caused injury and death to animals in the name of entertainment. Citing pathologists at the Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine, Wills claimed that the dead dog was a victim of exertional myopathy and that all previously unexplained deaths in the Iditarod resulted from that condition. Found chiefly in hoofed animals, especially horses, and human beings (most notably military recruits), exertional myopathy is the breakdown or death of muscle tissue during exercise, a process that floods the bloodstream with myoglobin, causing the animal to "tie up"—become stiff-gaited—or even die, usually from kidney failure. The causes of the condition are little understood, but Wills seized on preliminary diagnoses to conclude that the dogs were run to death and that the Iditarod was, therefore, tainted and should be continued only if its format was altered to slow down the race. (Currently the Iditarod clock runs continuously; in a stage race, in contrast, rest periods do not count against the total elapsed time.) At this writing Wills has yet to produce the full report he promised last spring.

Checkup time: a volunteer Iditarod veterinarian examines a dog

Enraged by what they considered a betrayal, the race organizers expelled Wills from the animal-care committee and campaigned to rally medical and popular support. But last September they suffered another major setback: Timberland announced that it was discontinuing its sponsorship, which dated back to 1985 and amounted to about 20 percent of the race's $1.8 million annual budget. Timberland did, however, donate $50,000 to PRIDE (Providing Responsible Information on a



Chow time: boiling water to heat food for the team

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Dog's Environment), an organization founded in 1993 to promote the humane treatment of dogs, for animal care and testing during this year's Iditarod.

Lost on none of the participants in this continuing drama is the bitter irony that the sole fatality in last year's race was H.C., a six-year-old female and a two-time Iditarod veteran on Susan Butcher's team. Some 230 miles into the race the dog expired without warning. Arguably the world's best-known musher, Butcher has long lobbied for more-humane treatment of sled dogs. She even taught David Wills the intricacies of the sport so that he could better understand the Iditarod. In announcing the Humane Society's opposition Wills paid Butcher a backhanded compliment: "Susan Butcher's concern for her dogs is genuine and heartfelt. Yet even she—a person who is remarkably attentive to the well-being of her dogs—cannot safeguard the health of her animals in this race."

Wills's actions have led some observers to conclude that he was using the Iditarod to gain publicity—and donations—for the Humane Society. Whatever his motivation, Wills has raised a number of questions that the Iditarod Trail Committee and mushers must address. Are long-distance sled-dog races dangerous for dogs? If so, can they be made safe? If not, why are dogs dying?

WILLS'S charge that dogs are being run to death is at best an exaggeration. Yet because he is an executive of the largest animal-protection organization in the world—with 2.3 million members and constituents—and because he has tracked the race for four years, his pronouncements carry considerable weight with the media and potential sponsors. Answering the fundamental question—why sled dogs die suddenly while exercising—requires extensive research, which has proceeded slowly because of a lack of funding and, until recently, concern.

The objects of this attention are medium-sized, fiercely competitive dogs, averaging fifty-five pounds for males and forty-five for females. Most of the so-called northern breeds—including malamutes and Siberian huskies—serve as sled dogs, but the animals that make up successful racing teams are nearly always Alaskan huskies, bred for speed, endurance, sociability, competitive drive,

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What are the facts?

Should Israel Return the Golan? A point can be made that the whole idea of Israel's yielding the Golan Heights to Syria in order to obtain peace has no merit. Syria's historic claim to the Golan is dubious. The Golan is a desolate plateau that covers less than one percent of Syria's territory. Its only purpose for Syria is as a launching pad for attacks against Israel. For Israel, on the other hand, it provides indispensable strategic depths against attack and the ability to monitor any hostile movement on the part of the Syrians. The current Israeli government seems to be disposed to return part or all of the Golan to Syria. But it would be a first in the history of the world that, in order to attain peace, the victor returned to the vanquished aggressor any territory that had been acquired in the conflict. A much saner and more justified approach would be for Syria, in the spirit of "land for peace", to yield the Golan to Israel. It would be a small price to pay for peace.

There are those who believe that if such a return of part or all of the Golan should ultimately be agreed upon, a United States military force should be stationed indefinitely in the area in order to serve as a buffer between the two countries. One wonders what peace it could be if it required outside military force to keep the erstwhile enemies apart. But there are practical reasons why stationing U.S. forces on the Golan would be a very bad idea.

A Potential Vietnam-like Scenario. U.S. forces on the Golan would be stationed in an area populated by a menagerie of well-armed terrorists, proxies of hostile radical regimes, such as those of Syria itself, but also of Iran, Iraq, Libya and others. They would not hesitate to target U.S. servicemen. Can one doubt that a suicide bomber would wish to find glory be blowing up a U.S. barracks and killing perhaps hundreds of U.S. soldiers, just as happened in Lebanon in 1983? And it's clear that an outraged American public would demand the immediate return of its troops from such a costly project that is of no discernible benefit to the United States. Putting a U.S. military presence into this stormy junction would inevitably drag the United States into costly inter-Arab and Arab-Israel disputes and would deepen Russia's involvement in the region.

> "Involvement of the U.S. as a military buffer between Syria and Israel...could involve the United States in a Vietnam-like scenario, certainly a most unwelcome development."

Israelis have always fought their own battles. If U.S. troops were introduced into the area, Israel would become militarily dependent on the United States and that would be to the detriment of both countries. Because Israel is the most important strategic and political asset that the United States has in the entire Middle East, an area of immense geopolitical importance to our country. Deployment of U.S. troops on the Golan would change Israel's role from being such an asset to that of becoming a potentially substantial liability.

A U.S. military presence on the Golan, an area immediately adjacent to the Syrian capital of Damascus, would in time be perceived by Syria as an infringement on its sovereignty. President Assad or his successor could therefore be expected to push for eventual removal of such force, similar to Egypt's demand in 1967 for withdrawal of U.N. troops from Sinai—the event that triggered the Six-Day-War. Thus, war rather than peace could result form a deployment of U.S. troops. Involvement of the U.S. as a military buffer between Syria and Israel could be incredibly expensive in dollars, in casualties and in political capital. Worst of all, entering this quagmire could involve the United States in a Vietnam-line scenario, certainly a most unwelcome development.

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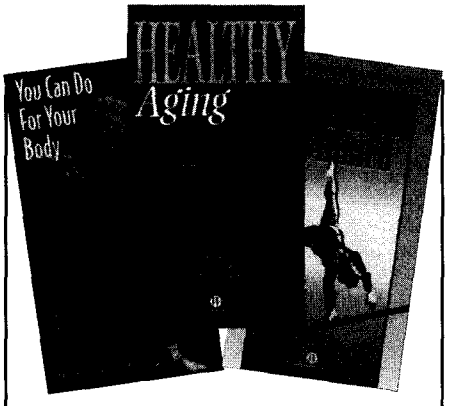

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sound feet, a good appetite, and a strong cardiovascular system. When breeding their dogs, top mushers regularly seek "hybrid vigor" through the incorporation of new bloodlines. Martin Buser, for example, has had success with huskies that have some hound blood, from crosses generations ago with greyhounds, salukis, and setters.

David Monson, Susan Butcher's husband and a co-owner, with Butcher, of Trailbreaker Kennels, in Eureka, Alaska, says that most mushers are looking for "deep-chested good running animals" that can operate as a team. Professional mushers know they need two years—by which time the animal is full-grown—to get an idea about whether a dog has talent for racing. Dogs that don't prove their mettle as racers are placed in homes or kept as pets. Those passing muster are trained like athletes: Susan Butcher logs an average of 10,000 miles a year with her dogs. One or two great lead dogs can turn a team of also-rans into champions.

Arleigh Reynolds, an assistant professor of clinical sciences at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, says that Alaskan huskies are physiological marvels, possessing as much as three times the oxygen-uptake capacity of top human marathoners. Reynolds and the half dozen other veterinarians I interviewed for this report—including Karin Schmidt; Ken Hinchcliff, of Ohio State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, who has done field tests on dogs running the Iditarod and the Yukon Quest; and John Blake, the veterinarian at the University of Alaska's Institute of Arctic Biology who performed the autopsy on H.C.—stated unequivocally that they saw nothing inherent in the race to support the assertion that it causes dogs to die through overexertion by forcing them to run too far too fast.

Charging that David Wills and the Humane Society "misrepresented the initial necropsy [autopsy]" on H.C., Blake told me that the society "claims that dogs can be run to death fairly easily, but that's not true." Blake said, "If it were possible to run a dog to death, then given the thousands of dogs in long-distance racing in Alaska, you would have more fatalities."

To this day no one is quite sure what killed H.C. or any of the other sled dogs that have died unexpectedly. Pathologists around the country have examined slides

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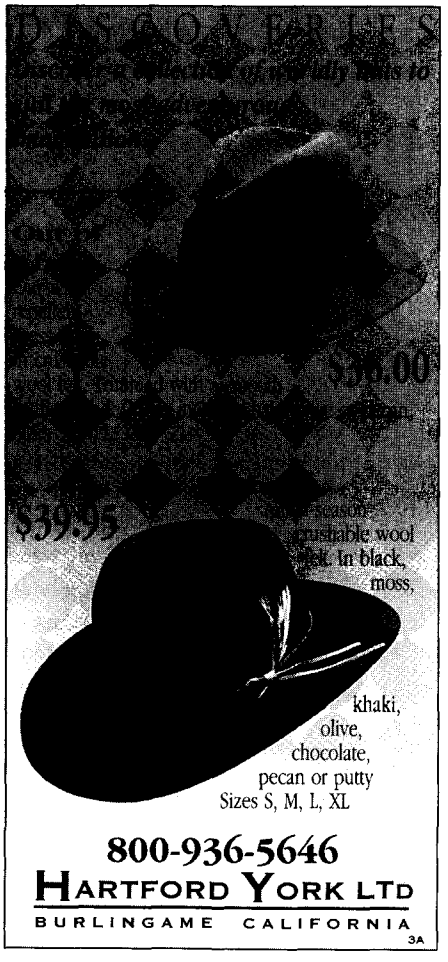

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of H.C.'s tissues without reaching a consensus. Although the muscle cells show signs of exertional myopathy, Reynolds and Hinchcliff, among others, believe that H.C. must have had some pre-existing abnormality. Blake speculates that a predisposing condition, such as hypothyroidism, triggered the exertional myopathy, which then flooded the dog's system with potassium, causing a fatal heart attack. Sudden death is, he says, the most extreme of "a whole spectrum" of effects he calls "sled-dog myopathy." Understanding that condition is the challenge now facing members of the International Sled Dog Veterinary Association.

The veterinarians I spoke with agreed that a dog must exercise to suffer myopathy but that distance and duration are not triggers. Contrary to Wills's assertion that sled dogs do not die in shorter races or in recreational mushing, a sprinter or weekend warrior can fall prey as readily as an Iditarod veteran. In fact, poorly trained dogs probably suffer more, not fewer, sprains and breaks.

Last year Karin Schmidt supervised a corps of thirty volunteer veterinarians who examined each dog in the Iditarod at every checkpoint. They had the responsibility of ensuring that dogs that were injured or showed signs of overexertion, such as a sudden loss of weight or appetite, were dropped from the race. Aiming to avoid any fatalities this year, the vets have intensified pre-race testing and plan to redouble their scrutiny of animals during the competition.

To help achieve that goal, the Iditarod Trail Committee approved a reduction in team size for this year's race. Mushers will begin with sixteen dogs, rather than twenty; they must finish with at least five. Schmidt believes that the reduction, which she favored, will force mushers to use their most experienced dogs and will make caring for teams easier. Wills and some observers argue that the new rule, combined with a decrease in the number of food drop points (which will force mushers to carry more provisions), will slow the race down. Buser and other mushers say no.

Fast or slow, the sled dogs love to run. It is incumbent on their human guardians to ensure that they run into health rather than death. As the most prestigious sled-dog race in the world, the Iditarod must lead the way.

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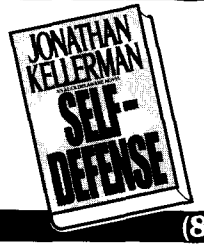

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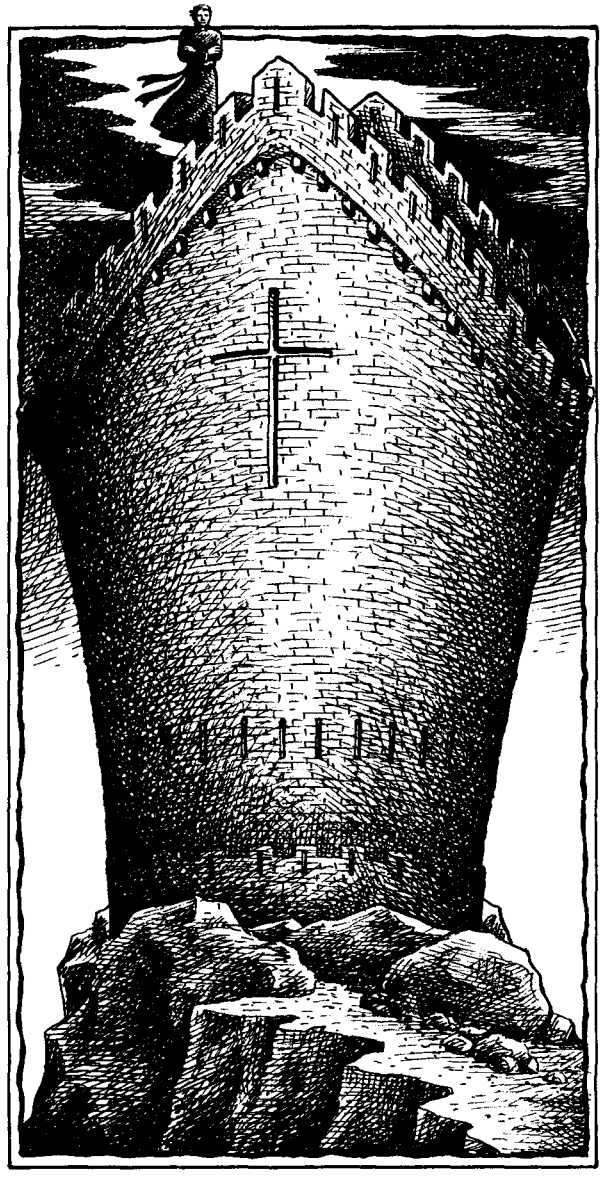
The Price of Orthodoxy

A runaway best seller, the new Catholic Catechism is a summa of certainty

by Charles R. Morris



THE Catechism of the Catholic Church is the quietest of publishing phenomena. The English edition went on sale in the United States last June, and sales rocketed past the two-million mark in October. For months the book was almost impossible to find, and its various American publishers have only recently caught up with their backlogs. The Catechism is distributed by sixteen different publishers, the largest of them being the U.S. Catholic Conference, the Church's official American organization, which licenses the others. Although the text and format are identical from one edition to the next, all the publishers are producing both hard-cover ($29.95) and soft-cover ($19.95) versions, and many of their sales are through the mails. Because the major best-seller lists usually separate titles by publisher and by hard-cover or soft-cover, and typically collect sales data from bookstores, they do not reflect the Catechism's huge sales.

Those sales have been achieved without much advertising to speak of, let alone the talk-show appearances that are supposed to power modern book marketing. Now that priests are using Catechism references in their Sunday sermons and the book is finally available in local stores, sales should chug along for months to come. It seems perfectly plausible that four or five million copies—one for every five American Catholic homes—will eventually be sold. (Reportedly, editions in dozens of other languages, from Urdu to Icelandic, are also doing extremely well, although the Vatican does not release sales figures.) And yet the Catechism was primarily intended as a resource for bishops and pastors as they developed religious-instruction manuals of their own.

The word "catechism" is rooted in the Greek for "oral instruction." Saint Augustine referred to religious training as "catechesis" in the fourth century, but the use of "catechism" to mean a manual of religious doctrine does not appear until the late Middle Ages. Medieval catechisms were typically instructional aids, and almost always consisted of questions and answers—a format maintained by the vast majority of catechisms down to the present day, but not by the present work. Until relatively recently American Catholic children in grade school had to learn the questions and answers of the famous Baltimore Catechism (there were many versions, varying in level of difficulty) by heart every year.

The first catechism, in the modern sense of a compendium of doctrine, was Martin Luther's Small Catechism of 1529, arguably the greatest single influence on the genre ever since. John Calvin's Catechism, a response to Luther's, came in 1541, and the Heidelberg Catechism, ecumenically combining Calvin and Luther, in 1563. The first official Catholic catechism—and until the publication of the present volume the only one promulgated by the Vatican for the universal Church—was the Roman Catechism, issued in 1566, after the close of the Council of Trent. Trent was the great eighteen-year-long gathering of bishops which enunciated the detailed program of Catholic faith which has for the most part obtained to the present day. It signaled the beginning of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, and its catechism was intended to unify pastoral teaching and present a solid doctrinal wall against the onslaughts of Protestantism.

Illustrations by Jean-François Allaux

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THE new Catechism is similarly being published at a time of great doctrinal turmoil within the Church, and because it conspicuously adopts the same basic outline as the Roman Catechism, it invites comparison with its predecessor as an exercise in line-drawing, a polemic against unorthodox theology. The target this time, however, is not Protestant sectarians but liberal theologians within the Church itself. Ever since Vatican II, the great liberalizing council of 1962–1965, many of the Church's best theologians have been chipping away at the old dogmas, reducing great bodies of orthodoxy to evocative metaphors about good and evil, while leaving most issues of personal behavior to individual conscience and taste. The difficulty is that the very insistence on orthodoxy, the willingness to take a stand on details, is what draws so many people to Catholicism in the first place. To suspicious traditionalists, "progressive" Catholicism seems a lot like Protestantism. The emphasis on personal conscience even suggests that the Church's imposing hierarchy, its great engine of orthodoxy, may be just a medieval excrescence that is perhaps best quietly dispensed with, like the royal family in England.

Any doubts about the Catechism's polemical intentions may be quelled by the comments of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, the Vatican official in charge of doctrine, in a separately bound *Introduction*. Ratzinger strikes a surprisingly pugnacious note against "those interests which portray the Catechism as inimical to progress," singling out by name Hans Küng, a Swiss theologian and a seminal thinker for theologically liberal Catholics, who sees the Catechism as an assertion of power by the Church's "Roman party." In America the controversy has been heightened by an embarrassing intramural dispute over the Vatican's insistence on a gender-insensitive English translation—the word for "humanity," for example, is unfailingly rendered as "Man."

But despite bruising internal struggles over the text, the final product is astonishingly good—proof, perhaps, that the Lord is still kindly disposed toward religion. Pointedly eschewing the doctrinal thunderbolts of Catholic tradition, the Catechism walks the reader toward theological conclusions at a gentle pace, with

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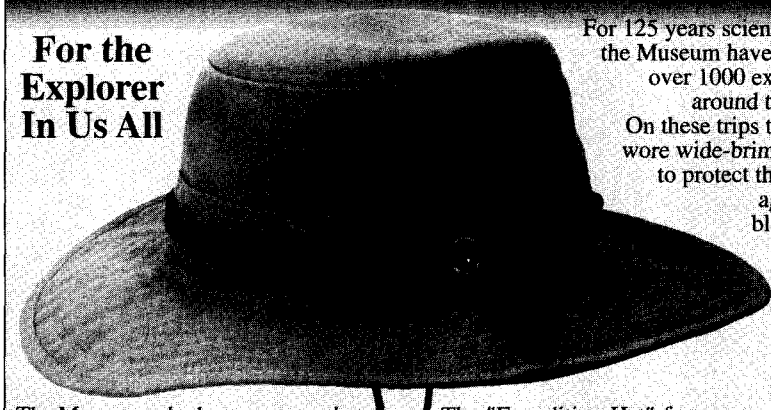

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leisurely and fascinating side trips through the Scriptures and the Church fathers. A ruminative twenty-eight-page analysis of the Lord's Prayer, which closes the text of the 803-page book, is especially good. The physical layout of the book is similarly felicitous, with large, easy-to-read type, and running marginal citations that allow one to pursue ideas or themes into other sections—altogether a browser's delight.

THE huge sales would seem to put to rest any question of whether post–Vatican II Catholics still yearn for some of the old certainty—market indicators, at least, suggest that the Vatican has correctly judged its audience. But the Catechism may yet prove to be a risky venture, because the text itself points to the deep theological fissures within the Church which could eventually lead to a schism as serious as the one that four centuries ago prompted the publication of the original Roman Catechism.

Its many pleasures notwithstanding, there is a jarring disjuncture between the Catechism's rhetoric and its conclusions, an awkward straddle between two worlds. At the level of language and approach it is sedulously relaxed and open-minded, but at the level of specific propositions its stance is resolutely pre-modern. There really was, the Catechism insists, a first man and woman, and the Fall is not just a provocative metaphor but "a primeval event, a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of man." Angels are real creatures, "a truth of faith," although many modern theologians would feel more comfortable treating them as symbols for the action of good and evil in the world. Satan is not merely a principle of evil but a real being—a "good angel" who became evil by his "own doing." There is a "hierarchy of creatures," defined by their position in the Creation story—"creeping things," therefore, presumably outrank birds. Needless to say, no attempt is made to accommodate doctrine to even the most generalized notion of evolution.

The Catechism's defenders argue that it is only a doctrinal snapshot, not a guide to a work in progress, and in principle no teaching gains theological stature merely from being included. But except for clues discernible only to experts, it makes no attempt to flag those propositions that are

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debatable, controversial, under active development, or likely to be re-examined or changed in the near future. Truth is presented as a monolithic whole; assurance is purchased, as it has been over the centuries, at the price of discrimination. Tagging the status of each proposition would have been unwieldy and confusing, supporters suggest, but one suspects that it would also have encouraged the revisionists, which is the last thing the Vatican wanted.

The conflict of sensibilities is painfully evident in the realm of personal ethics. In the tradition of Vatican II, marital sex is specifically recognized as good in itself; indeed, the marriage bed is extolled as "noble and honorable. . . a source of joy and pleasure." Then, in almost the same breath, the Catechism reverts to the medieval teaching that the only legitimate end of sex is procreation, condemning contraception as "intrinsically evil." Contraception, in fact, is condemned more harshly than homicide, which is permissible in some circumstances. Similarly, although the Catechism praises fertility research, it condemns *in vitro* fertilization, even if the husband and wife supply their own sperm and egg, on the dubious ground that it "establishes the domination of technology." It resolutely exalts the equality of men and women, and just as resolutely pronounces the ordination of women "not possible"—a phrase that leaves little room for compromise.

Survey data suggest that the majority of American Catholics have long since quietly parted company with the Church on personal issues, such as contraception, divorce, and even abortion, while retaining their identity as Catholics. The Church, that is, could be on its way to dividing into what one might call "large-church" and "small-church" communities, along the lines of, say, Reform and Orthodox Judaism. Large-church Catholics would treat their religion as a form of cultural identity—a source of "stories," as the Catholic novelist and sociologist Father Andrew Greeley recently put it—but would pick and choose among doctrines, while their small-church brethren would stick firmly with the old orthodoxies. By so steadfastly refusing to blur the edges of received doctrine, the Catechism could lend considerable impetus to that process.

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BRIEF REVIEWS

In the Place of Fallen Leaves

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of the summer everything has changed for Alison except her sense of a family solidarity that will continue into the future as it has lasted through its long past. Mr. Pears's writing is graceful, sometimes lyrical, often amusing, and always engaging.

Reef

by Romesh Gunesekera. The New Press, 144 pages, $20.00.

Triton, the novel's first-person protagonist, is eleven years old when his uncle turns him over to Mister Salgado, "a real gentleman," to do "whatever the hell he tells you." The place is Sri Lanka, wavering between traditional placidity and political uproar. Triton dutifully learns to please his kindly employer, becoming the ideal houseboy-cook, totally devoted to the well-being of Mister Salgado. Aside from cooking, which he does superbly, and keeping the mildly decrepit establishment in order, Triton's only interests are admiration for the beauty of his island and every book he can lay hands on. His only sympathies are with the affairs of Mister Salgado and his circle. Triton should be dull, but Mr. Gunesekera's skill makes the young man's narrow view revealing, by implication, of a disintegrating society, and his sometimes imaginative notions worth respect. The tale has a touch of magic in it, and the descriptions of lush Sri Lankan scenery are delightful.

A Way Through the Wilderness

by William C. Davis. HarperCollins, 400 pages, $30.00.

Mr. Davis's history of the Natchez Trace and the southern frontier abounds in anecdote—some of dubious provenance—and practical detail. One learns who operated early inns and where, what their prices were, and which provided the worst accommodations and the least-edible food. One learns that the first official road, replacing Indian trails, ran well behind schedule and well over the projected cost. One encounters Indians both friendly and hostile and a traveler who, lavishly entertained with dishes almost entirely composed of variations on the sweet potato, went to bed on a mattress stuffed

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The Atlantic Monthly Puzzler contest—heretofore a monthly affair—is now a once-a-year event, while the Puzzler itself continues its regular monthly appearances. In the April issue Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon will introduce this year's contest puzzle—designed to challenge even the fans who have solved the pair's past offerings. The prize is a $150 gift certificate to Zingerman's, the gourmet-food mail-order house frequently mentioned in Corby Kummer's food columns as a source for high-quality ingredients. So whet your appetite along with your pencil.

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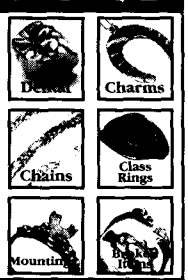

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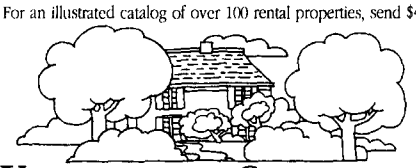

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with sweet-potato vines and dreamed "that we had turned into a big potato, and that some one was digging us up." Mr. Davis has assembled a fine hodgepodge of information, some serious, some trivial, some exotic. What he has not done is offer any clue as to how the prices he quotes compared with those current in longer-settled areas, or how money values of the early nineteenth century compare with those of today. A financially minded reader must resort to a personal computer for that sort of thing. Those content with wild characters, tall tales, shipping traffic on the Mississippi, and southern politics can forge happily ahead on their own.

East, West

by Salman Rushdie.
Pantheon, 224 pages, $21.00.

Set in the East, the West, or where the twain uncomfortably meet, Mr. Rushdie's short stories expertly accomplish what the author intends to have them do, from arousing a chuckle to chilling a spine.

The Notorious Life of Gyp: Right-Wing Anarchist in Fin-de-Siècle France

by Willa Z. Silverman.
Oxford, 352 pages, $27.50.

When a French aristocrat of the nineteenth century found herself encumbered with an uncongenial and improvident husband, one permissible recourse was the pen. Marie de Gonneville, first separated from her husband, Arundel-Joseph, last of the Mirabeau counts, and then widowed by that clumsy nobleman, turned to novel writing with some success. Her one child, whose name ultimately became Sibylle-Gabrielle Marie-Antoinette de Riquetti de Mirabeau, comtesse de Martel de Janville, did the same with immense success. She signed herself "Gyp," pretended to be an army officer with a satirical view of fashionable society, perfected (if she did not entirely invent) the enfant terrible as narrator in the persona of Petit Bob (who also drew caricatures), and aroused social disapproval, political excitement, and the respect of Henry James (whose admiration may have come from Gyp's ability to tell

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a tale fast and entirely through dialogue —things he could not do). She was an altogether remarkable woman, a combination of fanatical nationalist and right-wing anarchist, capable of recruiting a mob and of informing a court that her profession was "Anti-Semite," which was at least partly true. Her influence during the Dreyfus Affair was pernicious. She died in 1932, aged eighty-three, and was projecting a new book as late as 1930. Ms. Silverman has written an admirable biography of this enormously productive and frequently inconsistent author, offering reasonable explanations for Gyp's attitudes and opinions and providing a sound re-creation of the society that she inhabited, entertained, and disturbed.

Charles M. Russell: Sculptor

by Rick Stewart.
Amon Carter Museum/Abrams, 400 pages, $95.00.

Mr. Stewart is the curator of western painting and sculpture at the Amon Carter Museum, but his study of Russell's sculpture extends far beyond the museum's collection. He begins with a brisk, well-written account of Russell's picturesque career, proceeds to the intricacies of settling the artist's estate and that of his devoted and stubborn widow, and concludes with a survey of all known Russell works, including the unauthorized and even fake pieces that appeared after Nancy Russell's death. Anyone who hopes to buy a Russell bronze should take warning from that final section. The range is booby-trapped. Noncollectors can simply enjoy the photographs of the muscular, evocative Old West figures that Russell created, not only in bronze but out of "wax, wood, string, hemp, paint," with the occasional incorporation of wire, pins, tacks, or anything else that came to hand. The contents of the toolbox with which Russell was working at the time of his death included (besides eight modeling tools) wire, thread, glue, two tin spoons, a handleless china cup, a dozen other oddments, and "1 pair old Black Silk Gloves Tied Together." Along with his gifts as a painter, a sculptor, and an author, Russell was an uninhibited master of mixed media.

—by Phoebe-Lou Adams

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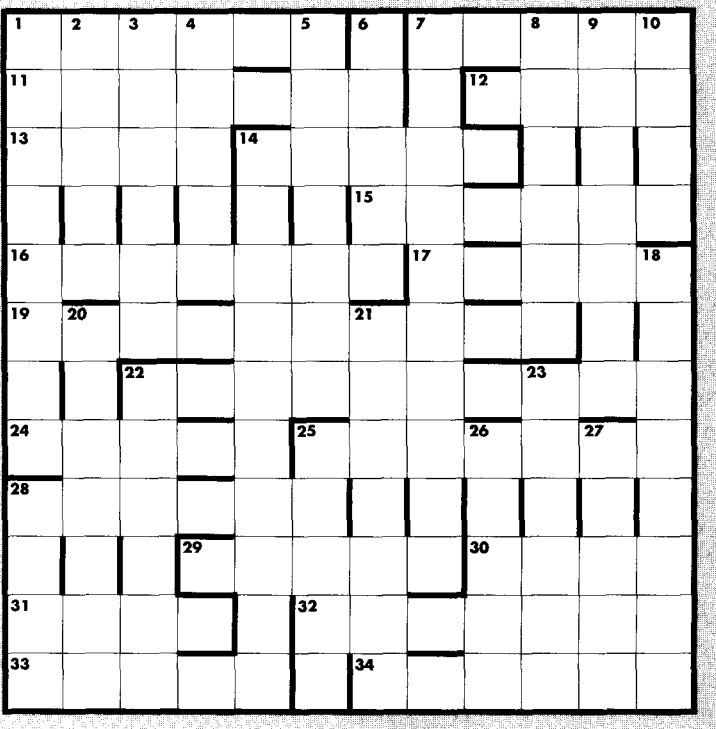
THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

Zip Code

Whenever an O occurs in a clue answer, it fails to match the letter of the crossing word with which it shares a diagram square. Use each O to circle the other letter in such a square, and you'll spell out (reading left to right, column by column) an actual U.S. location particularly deserving of a zip code. Answers include four proper nouns.



See page 128 for Puzzler contest details. The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 125.

Across

1. Zip code (6)
7. VIP sent back a stench stopper? (5)
11. Garland, beyond learning, is a deadly singer (7)
12. Searches for words in margins (4)
13. Jot half the alphabet? (4)
14. Wild speeches published by Eliot (5)
15. NYC underground put in your number (6)
16. College in Dublin: try getting into it (7)
17. Extra artist's first error in 3-D? (5)
19. Men sorting out old typewriters (10)
22. Obstinate cook again embraces thespian (10)
24. Somebody snooping right into waterfront area (5)
25. When locked inside a trunk, I will get most uncomfortable (7)
28. Senior citizens' flower-bearing shrubs (6)
29. Covers the sound of low-lying areas (5)
30. Test from the morning (4)
31. Small sprite's ego (4)
32. Erase around "p" in "empty" (7)
33. Deal with odd characters in Terre Haute (5)
34. Stops framing Secret Service with insults (6)

Down

1. Couple of clowns likely to talk nonsense (8)
2. Plant in season, after the first (5)
3. Pack's lead runner returned for event (6)
4. After hesitating at first, call up a guy with some muscle (5) (*hyphenated*)
5. Clergyman owning a power generator (7)
6. Hold firmly onto horse (5)
7. Birds (so what?) perched atop roofing materials (10)
8. Forest animals with 500 whiskers? (6)
9. Medical group befuddled true novice (7)
10. Skinny kid eating last of popcorn (4)
14. Data found in most thinly distributed woods (10) (*two words*)
18. Rock steady, I'm for light occasions? (8)
20. Prior more like a nobleman? (7)
21. Horse's equipment was first seized (7)
22. Pierce's puzzle (6)
23. Persian king raised risqué topic with Roman king (6)
25. Assistant outside of school is out of the way (5)
26. Many a celebrity wastes time in the audience (5)
27. Engineer tapes a flood (5)
28. Drive out of a block in Houston (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 745 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

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WORD IMPROVISATION

by J. E. Lighter

Boy Scouts and Boondoggles

DENVER International Airport: a $4 billion ghost field. Until computerized robotic baggage handlers can be made to function properly, the airport's towers, hangars, and shops will lie idle, awaiting the first pulse of commerce. Denver International can scarcely be invoked in the press without being tagged one of the costliest *boondoggles* ever.

But a *boondoggle* once cost little more than the price of a few strips of leather. The word's now-familiar sense—an extravagantly wasteful project, generally involving public funds—developed almost overnight, in full view of the American public. The story shows how, from innocuous beginnings, a word can sometimes gain instant notoriety.

Boondoggle is an American term that first appeared in print in the August 14, 1929, issue of the British satirical magazine *Punch*. Thousands of Boy Scouts had arrived in England for the 1929 World Scouting Jamboree. The septuagenarian Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the father of scouting and the "Chief Scout of the World," welcomed more than 40,000 Scouts from forty-two nations to Arrowe Park, Birkenhead, with a blast from the ceremonial kudu horn sounded at the first Scout camp in 1908. At one point during the two weeks of festivities the U.S. contingent gave Sir Robert what they called a *boondoggle*, a word used by American Scouts to denote fringed ornaments, braided-leather lanyards for attaching whistles and compasses, and neckerchief slides. "Boondoggle," *Punch* observed prophetically, "is a word to conjure with."

Six years later the conjuring began. In 1935 the United States was struggling against the Depression with a variety of public-works programs whose effectiveness was widely questioned. On April 3, 1935, a committee of New York aldermen investigating the city's Emergency Relief Bureau invited a witness named Robert Marshall to explain exactly what his low-level municipally funded job entailed. Marshall replied that he taught people on relief how to make things from leather and canvas. He called such items *boon doggles*. The committee chairman found this unfamiliar word "outlandish." Marshall's clarification made *The New York Times*:

> "*Boon doggles* is simply a term applied back in pioneer days to . . . things men and boys do that are useful in their everyday operations or recreations or about their home."
>
> "Named for Daniel Boone?"
>
> "No . . . It is *boon doggles*. It is spelled differently."

Aldermen snorted: another witness even taught eurythmic dance. Though relief employment extended from leathercraft to physiological research, the committee's chief counsel denounced most work projects as "junk" and "bunk." The next day the *Times* proclaimed that funds had been squandered to "TEACH JOBLESS TO PLAY," and put "*Boon Doggles*" in a subhead.

Enemies of New Deal relief expenditures seized the opportunity. Hoots of "*boondoggle*" rang from Republican pulpits. Overlooked was a finding that of 120,000 relief jobs in New York, only eight involved *boondoggle*-making instruction. Press and politics turned *boondoggle* into a synonym for pharaonic waste.

Was *boondoggle* really from "pioneer days"? Historians were mum. In Scotland *doggles* were marbles; was a *boon doggle* a "gift marble"? Unlikely. The movie actor Guy Kibbee said he had "*boondoggled*" in the Ozarks, making useful items from materials at hand. Kentucky claimed "*boontoggle*." Cowpokes were implicated. The leads went nowhere. No pre-1920s instance of *boondoggle* has ever been verified.

But the Boy Scouts of America stood prepared. A Scouting executive told the aldermen that *boondoggle* had been coined "out of the blue sky" by a Scouting enthusiast, Robert Link, of Rochester, New York. Link told *The Literary Digest* that he first used the word in 1926, as a nickname for his son. The word was taken up by Rochester Scouts to describe their plaited lanyards. But Link said nothing of the inspiration behind *boondoggle*, a term that spread suddenly, and with amazing semantic inflation, from industrious Scouts to skeptical politicians.

Investigations of slang by the editor of the Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang

Illustration by Polly Becker

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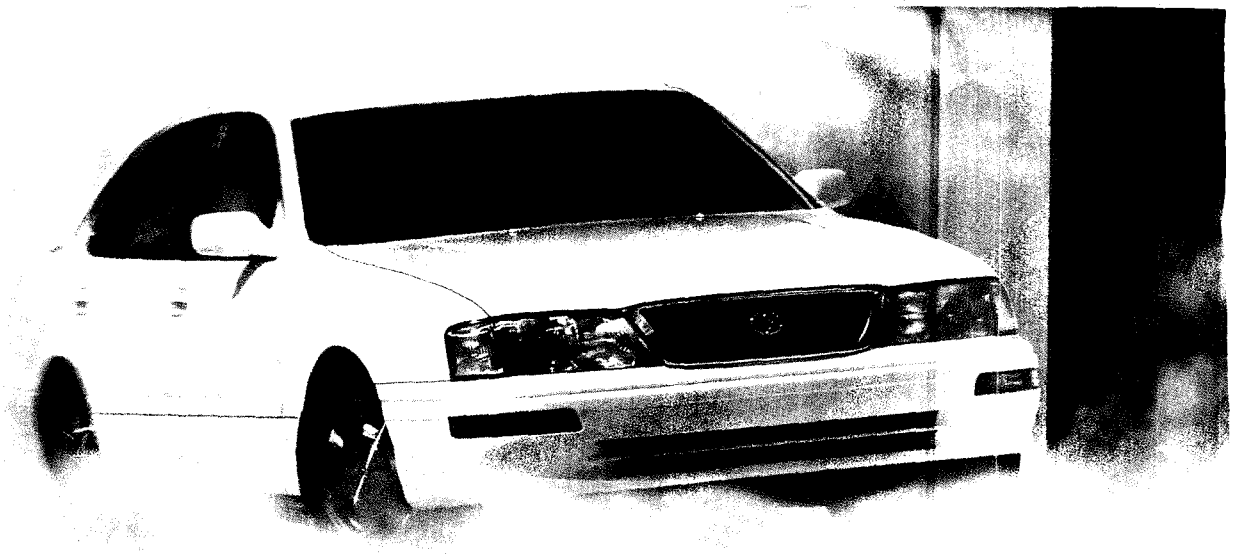

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